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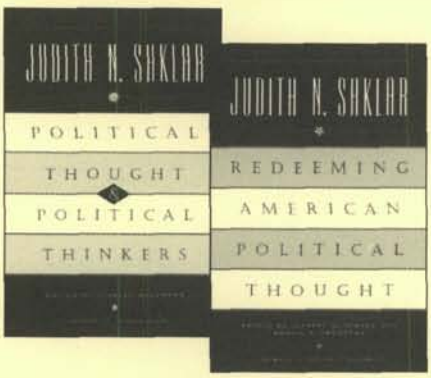

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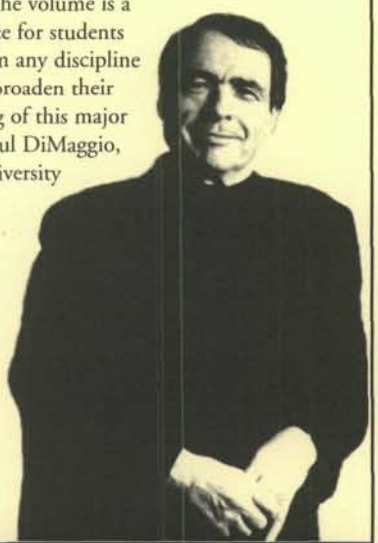

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—RALPH WALDO EMERSON, "The American Scholar," 1837

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Mr. Furnas, Meet Mr. Kirsch

This issue happens to contain essays, both on English literature, by two writers who graduated from Harvard exactly seventy years apart. "Extrapolating Shakespeare," a comic diatribe against modern Shakespearean interpretations on the stage and the page, is by J. C. Furnas, class of '27; "Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot," a provocative argument for replacing Eliot with Arnold as a model for contemporary poets, is by Adam Kirsch, class of '97.

Furnas claims that Harvard accepted him out of pity, mistaking the sweat splotches on the pages of his entrance exam, which he wrote on a hellishly hot June day in 1923, for tears. Kirsch offers no such explanation. Furnas and Kirsch both majored in English; both competed for the Bowdoin Prize, awarded annually to the best piece of scholarly undergraduate writing (Kirsch won, Furnas came in second); and both were elected to Phi Beta Kappa, though Furnas pawned his gold key in 1929 to finance a ritzy dinner with his fiancée.

Kirsch's essay, impeccably word processed on an IBM ThinkPad, arrived in our office accompanied by a letter addressed to "Dear Sir or Madam." From his conservative stance and his meticulous prose style, I could easily picture him. Sixtyish. Tweedy. Book-lined study. Pipe. Dog. However, when I called him up to accept the piece, his voice sounded so young that I blurted out, "How *old* are you, Mr. Kirsch?"

"Twenty-one," he said. "But I'm almost twenty-two."

When Joe Furnas wrote *his* piece—his ninth for the SCHOLAR—he was ninety-one (but he was almost ninety-two). It was typed with two fingers on a secondhand Smith Corona; he says he would no more use a word processor than he would shake rather than stir a dry martini. Although he has made a living as a writer for sixty-nine years, Furnas advises young writers to learn a trade—Xerox-machine repair, dental hygiene—that will stave off starvation while they establish themselves. Four days after he graduated from Harvard, Adam Kirsch started an internship in the literary department of *The New Republic*. I have the feeling that his knowledge of toner cartridges and tooth polish will remain limited.

A. F.

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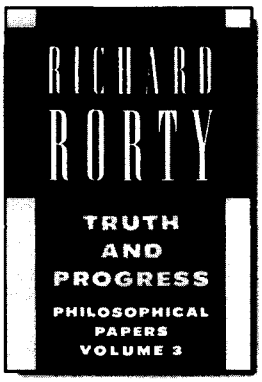

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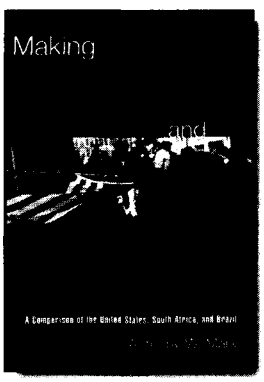

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AT LARGE AND AT SMALL

The Unfuzzy Lamb

PHILONOË

His name is surely part of the problem. Had he been Charles Tiger, he might not have to drag behind him, like a tattered baby blanket, his undeserved reputation for being namby-pamby and fuddy-duddy. *He* didn't think he was lamblike. After his best friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, referred to him as "my gentle-hearted Charles" in the 1797 poem "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," Lamb wrote him:

> In the next edition . . . please to blot out *gentle hearted*, and substitute drunken dog, ragged head, seld-shaven, odd-eye'd, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the Gentleman in question.

When I first read that letter, I misinterpreted it as polite self-deprecation: *Your poem is too kind; I do not merit such praise.* Now I recognize in Lamb's voice the same authentically aggrieved tone with which my three-year-old son casts off the constringent mantle of virtue: *Don't call me a good boy!*

Let me confess at the outset that I have a monumental crush on Charles Lamb. My fantasies are not precisely adulterous, but neither are they devoid of sensuality. Though never married and probably celibate, Lamb knew how to seize eros by the throat, give it a few sublimational shakes, and transform it into some of the most voluptuous prose ever written. In my mind's eye, we walk his beloved London streets ("O! her lamps of a night! her rich goldsmiths, printshops, toyshops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastry-cooks! St. Paul's Churchyard! the Strand! Exeter Change! Charing Cross!"), stopping for a quick codfish dinner ("that manly firmness, combined with a sort of womanish coming-in-pieces") and then a bookstall browse ("venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when [the owner] shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny [our]selves the gratification"), while he—small-bodied, large-headed, skinny-legged, tailcoated, top-hatted—recounts to me, with the characteristic stammer that only tobacco could loosen, an evening's worth of my favorite tales from *The Essays of Elia.*

I do not understand why so few other readers are clamoring for his company. It is a bad sign when a writer can be found more easily in secondhand bookstores—which, as I need hardly point out, are filled with books that people have gotten rid of—than in Barnes & Noble. I own nine volumes by and about Lamb, most of them out of print and, despite their engraved frontispieces and deckle-edged pages and grosgrain bookmarks, all of them ignominiously cheap. In England, the Charles Lamb Society still toasts "The Immortal Memory" at dinners held annually to commemorate his birthday (February 10, 1775). But in the United States, where he was once more widely read than in his own country, Lamb is kept alive largely through the tenuous resuscitations of university English departments: the ICUs of literature.

I cannot say I loved him the instant I laid eyes on him. Like many people, I encountered *Tales from Shakespear* (co-authored with Mary Lamb, who I assumed was his wife) at age ten or thereabouts, and thought it a snore. In high school, "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" was served up as a model of the essay form, but I was of the age that hungers for madness and violence, not descriptions of "the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling.*" Then, in my late twenties, I read "Readers Against the Grain":

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> Rather than follow in the train of this insatiable monster of modern reading, I would forswear my spectacles, play at put, mend pens, kill fleas, stand on one leg, shell peas, or do whatsoever ignoble diversion you shall put me to. Alas! I am hurried on in the vortex. I die of new books, or the everlasting talk about them. . . . I will go and relieve myself with a page of honest John Bunyan, or Tom Brown. Tom anybody will do, so long as they are not of this whiffling century.

I suppose my own century seemed pretty whiffling too, and in a mood of reactionary nostalgia—and also because I found the essay hilarious and lovely—I decided that anyone who used the word *whiffling* deserved further investigation. A biographical note on Lamb referred, as if it were common knowledge, to "the family tragedy." What family tragedy? I looked it up. Ah. There was the central event of Lamb's life, the hideous irritant around which the nacre of his genius coalesced, the staggering evidence that the dissertator on pork and pea shelling was in fact (if only I had known this at sixteen!) no stranger to madness and violence. In 1796, when Lamb was twenty-one, his sister lost her mind and murdered their mother.

It seemed incredible to me. Such things happen, of course; only a few weeks ago, a Yale Law School graduate with a history of schizophrenia stabbed his fiancée to death and diverted the readers of New York's newspapers for three or four days. 1998, 1796 . . . when it comes to tragedy, there is little difference between our whiffling centuries. But *Lamb?* I did not yet know his work—did not know how weird and dark it was, did not know of the tortured emanations on alcohol and nicotine and lost love and bad dreams. I was stuck in the "gentle-hearted Charles" rut and could not reconcile the passages I had read, all surface-skating, with any intimate knowledge of "tearing, mangling, choking, stifling, scorching demons."

Now I know that he and those demons, which he described in an essay called "Witches and Other Night Fears," were on familiar terms throughout his life. His earliest memories were of nocturnal visitations from hobgoblins, incubi, Chimeras, and Harpies. He insisted—a century before Jung—that these apparitions were not planted in his consciousness by scary stories, but already resident: "The archetypes are in us, and eternal." I feel certain, from two painfully recollective sentences he wrote in his forties, that his mother did not comfort him:

> Parents do not know what they do when they leave tender babes alone to go to sleep in the dark. The feeling about for a friendly arm—the hoping for a familiar voice—when they wake screaming—and find none to soothe them—what a terrible shaking it is to their poor nerves!

The son of an impoverished scrivener, Lamb was the last of seven children, four of whom died in infancy. His mother favored her more conventional elder son, John. Charles was raised largely by his sister, Mary, ten years older than he, who taught him the alphabet before he could speak and shared with him her fondness for *Pilgrim's Progress* and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Mary was plain, bookish, and shy: like Charles, a mystery to their mother, who, he later observed, "*never understood* her right. She loved her, as she loved us all with a Mother's love, but in opinion, in feeling, & sentiment, & disposition, bore so distant a resemblance to her daughter, that she never understood her right." But Charles understood Mary, and she him, with an empathy so fine-tuned that she once burst into tears because she had (accurately) detected a tone of false cheer in his voice. "She is all his Comfort—he her's," Coleridge wrote Robert Southey when Lamb was in his late teens. Theirs was to be one of the strangest, strongest, and most inextricably entwined sibling relationships in history.

When Lamb was seven, he was packed off as a charity pupil to Christ's Hospital, a school founded in 1552 "to take out of the streets all the fatherless and other poor men's children that were not able to keep them." Christ's Hospital "Bluecoat Boys" received an incomparable education in English and Latin, accompanied by regular whacks on the palm with a ferule, occasional whippings with a scourge, and, if they attempted to run away, imprisonment in "little, square, Bedlam cells, where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and

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a blanket . . . out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to." Lamb feared the school, but he also loved it, not so much for its masters as for its students. "The Christ's Hospital boy's friends at school," he was to write, "are commonly his intimates through life."

That was assuredly true for him. For it was there that he met Coleridge, of whom he was to say, on his old schoolmate's death in 1834, "He was my fifty years old friend without a dissension." (Well, almost. They had a spat or two but never a permanent rift.) When they met, Lamb was seven and Coleridge nine: two homesick little boys who instantly recognized in each other an affinitive amalgam of intelligence, imagination, oddity, and misery. Though Coleridge's family stood higher on the social ladder—his father, who had died the year before Coleridge met Lamb, was a vicar—there were some remarkable congruences. Both were the youngest children in their families; both were misunderstood and ignored by their mothers; neither had a brother to whom he was close. (Coleridge would later describe his brothers as "good men as times go—very good men; but alas! we have neither Tastes or Feelings in common.") To the beloved sister he had in Mary, Lamb added the beloved brother—as he put it, "more than a brother!"—he found in Coleridge.

Looking back on the pair of them—Lamb small and delicate, Coleridge tall and commanding—it would seem at first glance that Coleridge had all the luck. Coleridge went up to Cambridge; Lamb, despite a glorious academic record, was asked to leave Christ's Hospital at fourteen because of his stammer, which disqualified him from the career of clergyman that Bluecoat graduates were expected to pursue. Coleridge became a poet and a radical; Lamb, while writing poetry on the side, worked at a countinghouse and then, starting at seventeen, as a low-level clerk in the accountant's office of the East India House. Coleridge married; Lamb did not. Over the long run, however, the comparison becomes muddier. Coleridge abandoned his wife and became an opium addict; Lamb's life was, if nothing else (and against all odds), stable.

Ultimately stable. But, for a while, ruled and nearly destroyed by demons. As we move into the bitter heart of Lamb's life, there is a clear paper trail for us to follow, for Lamb recorded it all in a series of letters to his "more than a brother." On May 27, 1796, he wrote:

> My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The 6 weeks that finished last year & began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad house at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, & dont bite anyone.

Insanity ran in the family, on his father's side, so Lamb was not altogether surprised when overwork, financial problems, and rejection by a fair-haired country girl named Ann Simmons combined to bring on a "temporary frenzy." It also did not help that Coleridge, with whom he had been meeting nightly in a local alehouse to drink egghot and talk about metaphysics and poetry, had recently decamped from London to Bristol. All we know of the episode is that Lamb was indisputably irrational ("many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume if all told") and that the experience was not altogether unpleasant ("I had many many hours of pure happiness. Dream not Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur & wildness of Fancy, till you have gone mad"). The self-mocking levity was characteristic, as was the bizarrely incongruous postscript: "My civic and poetic compliments to Southey if at Bristol. Why, he is a very Leviathan of Bards!—the small minnow, I!" *Went mad. Oh, by the way, my best to Robert.*

Over the next four months, six long letters followed, filled mostly with close and useful criticism of Coleridge's works in progress, but occasionally breaking into paroxysms of loneliness:

> Thank you for your frequent letters: you are the only correspondent, and I might add, the only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society; and I am left alone.

Alone, that is, except for his family—invalid mother, senile father, elderly aunt, anxious sister—whose constant proximity, in their cramped lodgings on Little Queen Street, must have seemed more suffocation than comfort. Mary, who for several years had had periods of pros-

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trating depression, supplemented her brother's clerking salary with long hours of needlework and also bore the brunt of her mother's care, waiting on her during the day and sharing her restless bed at night.

On September 27, Lamb wrote Coleridge:

> My dearest friend—
>
> White or some of my friends or the public papers by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines. My poor dear dearest sister in a fit of insanity has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a mad house, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses,—I eat and drink and sleep, and have my judgment I believe very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. . . . Write,—as religious a letter as possible—but no mention of what is gone and done with—with me the former things are passed away, and I have something more to do than to feel.
>
> God Almighty have us all in His keeping!
>
> C. Lamb

Five days before he wrote those words, Lamb had arrived home from work to find his mother pierced to the heart with a carving knife, his father wounded in the head with a fork, and his sister still gripping the bloody murder weapon. Mary had apparently become enraged at her young dressmaking apprentice, picked up the knife, and chased the girl around the dining room. Her mother begged her to stop, the girl escaped, and Mary stabbed her mother. A jury that was convened the next day swiftly returned a verdict of lunacy.

I doubt that anyone has ever read this letter without noticing the adjectives that Lamb lavished on his "poor dear dearest sister" but withheld from his murdered mother. Matricide has never inspired less sympathy for the victim and more for the perpetrator. The letters that Lamb poured out to Coleridge over the next month constitute a most peculiar psychological record. About Mary, who was kindly tended by "the good Lady of the Mad house, & her daughter . . . [who] love her & are taken with her amazingly," he wrote:

> Of all the people I ever saw in the world, my poor sister was most and thoroughly devoid of the least tincture of selfishness. I will enlarge upon her qualities, poor dear, dearest soul, in a future letter, for my own comfort, for I understand her thoroughly; and if I mistake not, in the most trying situation that a human being can be found in, she will be found—(I speak not with sufficient humility, I fear,) but, humanly and foolishly speaking, she will be found, I trust, uniformly great and amiable.

And:

> Within a day or two of the fatal one, we dressed for dinner a tongue, which we had had salted for some weeks in the house. As I sat down, a feeling like remorse struck me: this tongue poor Mary got for me; and can I partake of it now, when she is far away?

There were hundreds of words about missing Mary, and not one about missing his mother. In fact, he mentioned her at any length only twice: once when he found his way "mechanically" (a horrifically honest adverb) to the side of her coffin, where he begged her forgiveness for forgetting her so soon; and once, after angrily observing that she had never appreciated her daughter, when he reminded himself, "Still she was a good mother, God forbid I should think of her but *most* respectfully, *most* affectionately." He was trying hard with those italics, but his heart wasn't in it.

Lamb's older brother, John, who was "little disposed (I speak not without tenderness for him) at any time to take care of old age & infirmities," managed to wriggle out of his familial responsibilities and dump them all on twenty-one-year-old Charles. Lamb—who was, after all, an accountant—calculated that his father's pension and his own salary together produced about £180 a year, "out of which we can spare £50 or £60 at least for Mary while she stays at Islington [asylum]. . . . If my father, an old servant maid, & I cant live & live comfortably on £130 or £120 a year we ought to burn by slow fires, & I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital." John thought Mary should be locked up in a mental institution, preferably Bedlam, for life; Charles was determined to take care of her himself. He

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bided his time for two and a half years until his father, who he knew would never accept her homecoming, had the courtesy to die. Ten days later, taking advantage of an act that allowed an insane criminal to be "liberated on security being given that he should properly be taken care of as a lunatic," Lamb brought Mary home. As Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, Lamb's friend and first biographer, put it, "he satisfied all the parties who had power to oppose her release, by his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life; and he kept his word."

Wordsworth, who lived with *his* sister, before and during his marriage, for fifty-five years, wrote of the Lambs:

> Her love
> (What weakness prompts the voice to tell
> it here?)
> Was as the love of mothers; and when years,
> Lifting the boy to man's estate, had called
> The long protected to assume the part
> Of the protector, the first filial tie
> Was undissolved; and in or out of sight
> Remained imperatively interwoven
> With life itself.

Charles and Mary shared a household for thirty-six years, in a state of what Lamb called "double singleness." They wrote *Tales from Shakespear* together, he taking the tragedies and she the comedies, working, as she described it, "on one table (but not on one cushion sitting), like Hermia and Helena in the Midsummer's Night's Dream; or, rather, like an old literary Darby and Joan." A collection of his sonnets was

> WITH ALL A BROTHER'S FONDNESS,
> INSCRIBED TO
> MARY ANN LAMB,
> THE AUTHOR'S BEST FRIEND AND SISTER.

They visited France together ("I & sister are just returned from Paris!! We have eaten frogs"). When he was forty-eight and she was fifty-eight, they affirmed their coupledom by adopting a teenaged orphan girl, who later married Lamb's publisher.

Mary was lucid and even-tempered most of the time, but under stress—a servant's death, a change of lodging—she often relapsed into insanity, and Lamb would walk her, weeping, to Hoxton Asylum, carrying a straitjacket. "What sad large pieces it cuts out of life," he wrote during one such absence. During another, his despair overflowed to Coleridge in the blackest letter of his life:

> Mary will get better again; but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful,—nor is it the least of our Evils, that her case & all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner *marked*. . . . I am completely shipwreck'd—My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead.

It is a dreadful thing to say, but I feel quite sure that if Mary had not murdered her mother, her brother would never have become Elia, the persona he assumed in the great essays he wrote in his late forties. I also feel quite sure that Elia would never have been born if Lamb had not been compelled to work as a clerk.

For thirty-three years, Lamb sat on a high stool, identical to those occupied by thirty other clerks; dipped his goose quill into two inkwells, one containing black ink and the other red (he called the latter clerk's blood); and recorded the prices of tea, indigo, and piece goods. It is worth remembering that while he was adding up figures in the East India House's stygian offices at Nos. 12–21 Leadenhall Street (what name could be more appropriate?), his friends—Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Godwin, De Quincey—were rambling in the Lake Country, experimenting with opium, siring illegitimate children, and planning a utopian Pantisocracy in America ("We shall . . . criticise poetry when hunting a buffalo," wrote Southey). Not only did he hate it; as Winifred F. Courtney, one of the most perceptive of his biographers, has pointed out, he was *bad* at it. Courtney examined some of Lamb's ledgers and found that he frequently made mistakes. He rubbed them out with his little finger, but they nonetheless haunted his dreams, from which, he wrote in one of his Elia essays, he "would awake with terrors of imaginary false entries."

When I first read Lamb, I imagined his life as an essayist to have been a pleasant stroll along a level, well-trod path. Now I see it as a technical climb along a knife-edged ridge, with

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a thousand-foot drop on either side. To the left lay the memory of the "day of horrors" and the constant anxiety over Mary's sanity, both of which threatened his own sanity as well as his ability to summon up sufficient calm to write. To the right lay the deadening drudgery of Leadenhall, which threatened to swallow his creativity whole. (Remember that during Melville's nineteen years as a customs inspector, he wrote absolutely nothing of note.) In the narrow space between anarchy and regimentation lay his essays, which I believe were made possible by—and also protected him from—his life's opposed poles.

Before the murder, Lamb had published only poems, and they were uniformly terrible. Immediately afterward, he told Coleridge: "Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind." The intended renunciation did not last long, but the output lessened, and, with a couple of exceptions, the quality did not improve. Because he took poetry far more seriously than prose, after the murder it seemed a self-indulgence, a "vanity"—unlike journalism, which paid, and thus contributed to Mary's keep. In the dedication to Coleridge that introduced his *Collected Works* of 1818, he wrote, "The sap (if ever it had any) has become, in a manner, dried up and extinct: and you will find your old associate . . . dwindled into prose and *criticism.*"

The "dwindling" was, in fact, a miraculous expansion. When he wrote those self-effacing words, he had already published some fine literary and theatrical criticism, but he was to find his true voice in the fifty-two essays—on chimney sweeps, on weddings, on old books, on sickness, on gallantry, on witches, on beggars, on ears, on roast pig—that he wrote between 1820 and 1825, working nights and Sundays, for the *London Magazine.* "True voice" is an odd phrase to use for a series of works written under a pseudonym (he borrowed "Elia" from an Italian clerk who had worked with his brother) and, though autobiographical, mendacious in some crucial respects. Elia, for instance, wrote, "Brother, or sister, I never had any—to know them. A sister, I think, that should have been Elizabeth, died in both our infancies." Mary became the more comfortably distant "cousin Bridget," who was, of course, neither insane nor a murderess. Lamb's mother was never mentioned; his father was transmuted into an amiable factotum named Lovel, no relation to Elia. And while the real Lamb cared devotedly for his relatives, Elia called *his* poor relations "a lion in your path,—a frog in your chamber,—a fly in your ointment,—a mote in your eye." By such healing subterfuges did Lamb's imagination extricate him from his family's stifling bonds.

True voice it was: funny (unlike Lamb the poet), intimate (unlike Lamb the accountant), and relaxed (unlike Lamb the family pillar). But not imperishable. On March 29, 1825, Lamb retired, with a generous pension, from the East India House, an event he chronicled in "The Superannuated Man." This was Coleridge's favorite essay; he called it "worthy of Charles Lamb in his happiest Carolo-lambian Hour." With heartbreaking bafflement, the superannuated Elia, released from the "thraldom" of his own clerkship, confessed, "I wandered about thinking I was happy, and knowing I was not. . . . I missed my old chains, forsooth, as if they had been some necessary part of my apparel." Lamb lived nine more years but wrote no more great essays. He and Elia had retired together, and without the clerk's humble vantage point, he found himself without a platform. Just as Lamb had required Mary's madness to nudge him from poetry to prose, so he required his old chains to liberate the unpretentious alter ego who defined the modern familiar essay.

Lamb once compared bad journalists to "the *crooked man,* of whom a facetious Greek Professor relates this comical story, that he swallowed a *tenpenny nail,* and voided it out a cork-screw!" Lamb did the opposite: he swallowed a series of corkscrews and turned them into tenpenny nails. I have spent many a Carolo-lambian Hour grieving over his life's unfair twists and turns and wishing that posterity could vindicate Elia's efforts to straighten them out. "Damn the age!" Lamb once said. "I will write for antiquity." Antiquity is not cooperating. My dog-eared 1933 anthology (the dog-eared part is fine; Lamb preferred well-thumbed volumes), called *Everybody's Lamb,* has become Hardly Anybody's Lamb. If I could make him Everybody's again, in my own whiffling century, I would forswear my spectacles, play at put, mend pens, kill fleas, stand on one leg, or shell peas.

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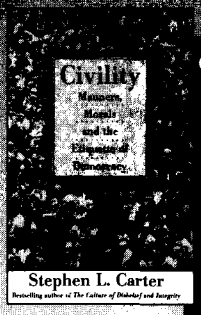

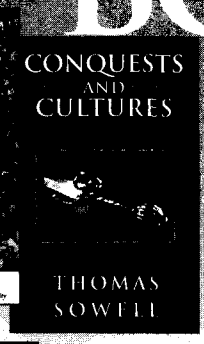

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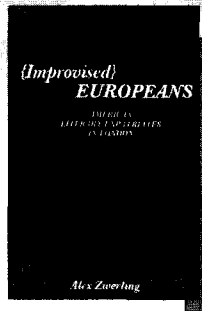

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The wilderness of the New World forms a vast natural cathedral. No work of man is its equal. Nowhere is there such natural grandeur. In many places the forest comes down to meet the sea, the green of leaves blending with the green water. I did not know whether to weep or cry aloud with joy, but in my heart of hearts I rejoiced to see the wonders wrought by God.

—HENRY HUDSON
on first seeing what is now New York Harbor, July 18, 1609

"Jesus Christ," said Gray. He picked it up. It was the back of a small skull. A few feet away was part of a femur: a thighbone. "Jesus Christ," he said again. We stood up, and began to see other bits of bone on the slope: a couple of vertebrae, part of a pelvis—all of them hominid. An unbelievable, impermissible thought flickered through my mind. Suppose all these fitted together?

. . . "I can't believe it," I said. "I just can't believe it."

"By God, you'd better believe it!" shouted Gray. "Here it is. Right here!"

—DONALD JOHANSON
on discovering "Lucy"
(Australopithecus afarensis, *the oldest ancestor of* Homo sapiens),
November 30, 1974

COMMONPLACE BOOK

Discovery

COLLECTED BY
ANDRÉ BERNARD

If you would know the precise moment, the idea first came across me the 8th of March of this year, 1618; but, chancing to make a mistake in the calculation, I then rejected it as false. I returned to it again with new force on the 15th of May; and it has dissipated the darkness of my mind, by such an agreement between the idea and my seventeen years' labor on Brahe's *Observations*, that at first I thought I must be dreaming, and had taken my result for granted in the first assumption. But the fact is certain, *that the proportion existing between the periodic times of any two planets is exactly the sesquiplicate proportion of the mean distances of the orbits.*

—JOHANNES KEPLER
on discovering the orbital relationships of the solar system

Origin of man now proved.—Metaphysic must flourish.—He who understands baboon will do more toward metaphysic than Locke.

—CHARLES DARWIN
Notebooks, *August 16, 1838*

At three in the afternoon a simultaneous "Halt" rang out from the drivers. They had carefully examined their sledge-meters, and they all showed the full distance—our Pole by reckoning. The goal was reached, the journey ended. I cannot say—though I know it would sound much more effective—that the object of my life was attained. That would be romancing rather too barefacedly. I had better be honest and admit straight out that I have never known any man to be placed in such a diametrically opposite position to the goal of his desires as I was at that moment. The regions of the North Pole—well, yes, the North Pole itself—had attracted me since childhood, and here I was at the South Pole. Can anything more topsy-turvy be imagined?

—ROALD AMUNDSEN
on first reaching the South Pole, December 14, 1911

I inserted the candle and peered in, Lord Carnarvon, Lady Evelyn and Callender standing anxiously beside me to hear the verdict. At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues of gold—everywhere the glint of gold. . . . I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, "Can you see anything?" it was all I could do to get out the words, "Yes, wonderful things."

—HOWARD CARTER
on first looking into the tomb of King Tutankhamen, November 26, 1922

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I prepared a tube, at first of lead, in the ends of which I fitted two glass lenses, both plane on one side, but on the other side one spherically convex, and the other concave. . . . I betook myself to observations of the heavenly bodies; and first of all, I viewed the Moon as near as if it was scarcely two semi-diameters of the Earth distant. . . . The surface of the Moon is not perfectly smooth, free from inequalities and exactly spherical, as a large school of philosophers considers with regard to the Moon and other heavenly bodies, but that, on the contrary, it is full of inequalities, uneven, full of hollows, and protuberances, just like the surface of the Earth itself, which is varied everywhere by lofty mountains and deep valleys.

—GALILEO GALILEI
on first observing the moon through a telescope, 1609

"Come here! Hurry! There are little animals in this rain water! . . . They swim! They play around! They are a thousand times smaller than any creatures we can see with our eyes alone. . . . Look! See what I have discovered!"

—ANTONY VAN LEEUWENHOEK
to his daughter Maria, on first observing living microorganisms through a microscope, 1673

I looked round, trembling for fear that there might be some further new unattainable aiguille. But no! no! I no longer had strength to go higher; the muscles of my legs seemed held together only by my trousers. But behold I was at the end of my journey; I was on a spot where no living being had ever been before, no eagle nor even a chamois!

—JACQUES BALMAT
on first ascending Mont Blanc, August 8, 1786

"What are we going to do to keep ourselves awake tonight?" All they'd seen so far was more mud, endless miles of bland, featureless bottom. Stu didn't answer. His eyes were glued to the *Argo* monitor. He had seen a new kind of image. "There's something," he said simply, as he pointed to the TV screen. . . . It was perfectly circular. "A boiler?" someone mused. "It's a boiler!"

ROBERT BALLARD
on discovering the wreckage of the Titanic, *August 31, 1985*

The Interpretation of Dreams contains the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime. . . . Being in love with the one parent and hating the other are among the essential constituents of the stock of psychical impulses which is formed at that time and which is of such importance in determining the symptoms of the later neurosis. . . . This discovery is confirmed by a legend that has come down to us from classical antiquity: a legend whose profound and universal power to move can only be understood if the hypothesis I have put forward in regard to the psychology of children has an equal universal validity. What I have in mind is the legend of King Oedipus and Sophocles' drama which bears its name.

—SIGMUND FREUD
The Interpretation of Dreams, *1900*

"I shall prove to you, my friends, that the Indian and Persian Gulfs and the Myrcanian Sea are all three connected and continuous. Our ships will sail round from the Persian Gulf to Libya as far as the Pillars of Hercules, whence all Libya to the eastward will soon be ours, and all Asia too, and to this empire there will be no boundaries but what God Himself has made for the whole world. . . ."

When Alexander ended there was a long silence. . . . Nothing was said until at last Coenus, son of Polemocrates, plucked up his courage to speak.

Which he did at some length, ending with the words "Sir, if there is one thing above all others a successful man like you should know, it is *when to stop.*"

—FLAVIUS ARRIANUS
on an address by Alexander the Great to his officers, 325 B.C.

I stood here the other day and I put one of these to my ear. I heard a child cry; I heard the telegraph instrument tick down at the station, 1,000 feet away; and I heard one curious, softly grinding sound that I could not identify till I followed up and found it to be a cow biting off and chewing grass, two-fifths of a mile distant.

—THOMAS EDISON
on his newly invented ear trumpet, 1878

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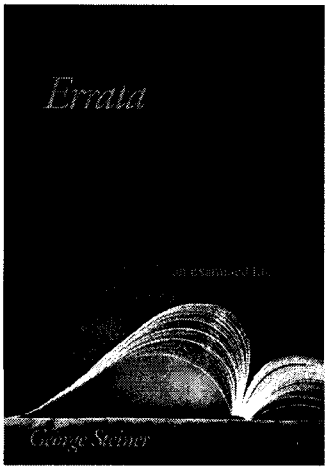

Errata

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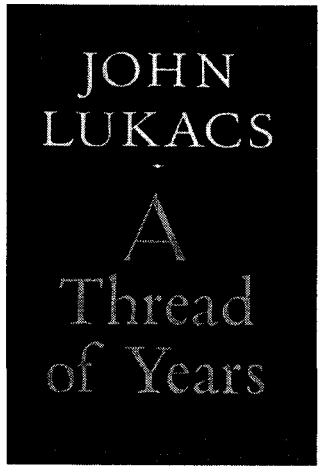

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The Real Arcadia

GARRY WILLS

Which of us, except in mere airy syllabling of names, knows ought of "sandy Ladon's lillied banks, or old Lycaeus, or Cyllene hoar"?
—John Ruskin

To European poets and painters, Arcadia was familiar territory, the home of all pastoral imaginings. But few who wrote about the place had ever been there. This was true even of Virgil, who put the place on the literary map. My own quick survey of a dozen classicist friends turned up none who had spent time in Arcadia, even though some of them lead tours of the Greek mainland and islands.

Is this because the region is uninteresting? The owner of a Greek restaurant in my neighborhood, whose family came from Arcadia, assured me that its scenery is majestic. Is it hard of access then? When I asked that question in Athens, I was told that an easy two-hour drive on a modern superhighway would get me there, to the mountainous core of the Peloponnese. Were the poets just vague in their gestures toward the region? On the contrary, their geography was very specific. In "Arcades," for instance, Milton managed to crowd the names of four of the area's mountains and one of its rivers into the lines that Ruskin mocked as "airy syllabling":

Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more
By sandy Ladon's lillied banks.
On old Lycaeus or Cyllene hoar
Trip no more in twilight ranks.
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
From the stony Maenalus
Bring your flock and live with us.

Garry Wills is Adjunct Professor of History at Northwestern University and former Associate Professor of Classics at Johns Hopkins. Among his recent books are *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth; John Wayne's America;* and *Lincoln at Gettysburg,* which won the Pulitzer Prize.

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If Milton never saw Arcadia, neither did most ancient Greeks. They thought it a region to be avoided, a spooky, even repulsive, place with mentally retarded inhabitants. The area's principal rites—the sacrifices to Wolf-Zeus atop Lycaeus (Wolf Mountain)—were thought to involve human sacrifice, not as an old legend like Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter to get a wind for Troy, but as a contemporary and annual occurrence. Even the historian Polybius, the one famous writer born in the region, apologized for his countrymen's savagery, though he noted that music softened them. So rough and resistant was the land, so hard was it to wrest a living from the soil, that Arcadians (or so went the joke) made good soldiers for hire because they were so eager to get out of the place. The comic poet Hermippus, listing famous exports in the fifth century B.C., said: "Egypt for papyrus, Syria for incense, Libya for ivory . . . and Arcadia for mercenaries."

Then what turned Arcadia's savage gorges into the pastoral poets' sweet vales, a land of serenity populated by singing shepherds and winsome milkmaids? How did the dim view held by Polybius and Hermippus metamorphose into the starry-eyed enthusiasm of Milton, Spenser, and Sidney, who gave the Arcadian pastoral a major role in the history of English poetry, and of Boccaccio and Sannazaro, who did the same in Italy? How did the Arcadian myth filter down in such a dulcified form to Marie Antoinette, who played the rural shepherdess in her deer park, imitating the fair nymphs of pastoral painters from Luca Signorelli to Poussin?

The man responsible for Arcadia's transformation from wasteland to utopia was Virgil. In the *Aeneid* he would use a myth that Arcadians had colonized the site of Rome before the Trojans reached it. He made those proto-Romans stand for virtuous simplicity. In his pastoral *Eclogues,* Virgil seized on the fact that Pan was, in Pindar's words, "Arcadia's ruler." The region was sometimes called Panland—in Greek, *Pania.* Pan was as rough as the country, half goat, half god, but Virgil preferred to idealize him by concentrating on a single aspect of his complex powers: the fact that he had invented the syrinx, now called the panpipe, and taught shepherds to play it and sing to it. Pan's invention has miraculous effects in Virgil's poetry, in which the harsh Arcadian landscape dances attendance on human flirtings. When a swain is disappointed in love, two of the most forbidding mountains of the Peloponnese (including the very peak on which those human sacrifices were said to have taken place) boohoo along with him:

> He lay there, crushed, beside a lonely rock,
> And Maenalus, clothed with pines, wept over him,
> While chill Lycaeus' barren rocks wept too.

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Alexander Pope picked up the conceit in his *Pastorals,* where a smitten shepherd

> Taught the rocks to weep, and made the mountains moan.

How would these lines impress one in their real (supposed) setting? I wanted to put together the rebarbative geography and the emollient verse, so I went down from Athens to spend a week in Keats's "dales of Arcady."

The first thing I learned is that on a modern map, Arcadia does not mesh with the far larger region the ancients called by the same name. Today's Arcadia is a political unit (a nome), trimmed back from its ancient realm to strike a balance with other representative districts in the Peloponnese. I took as my guide Pausanias, who wrote Greece's first travel book. Touring his known world in the second century A.D., he marked out Arcadia by three overlapping norms: ethnicity (all Arcadians claimed descent from a common ancestor named Arcas); language (they spoke a very old dialect); and religion (they had special rites, too primitive for most Greeks' tastes). I also used the wonderful map of all the discovered ancient sites in Madeleine Jost's *Sanctuaires et cultes d'Arcadie.*

Two of the mountains named by Milton are now in the nome of Corinth, but Pausanias noted that Erymanthus and Cyllene marked, respectively, the northwest and the northeast corners of Arcadia. So I began with them. Mount Cyllene (modern Killini) is the highest peak in Arcadia, a place jammed with mountains shouldering each other about in jumbled ranks. The *Homeric Hymn to Pan,* written in the fifth century B.C., addressed the god this way:

> Cyllene, holy to him, is his haunt.

The god had as a cult title "Cyllenean Pan." Sophocles made the chorus in *Ajax* summon Pan "from rocky Cyllene flailed with snow." The snow was gone by the time I reached Cyllene in June, though traces had lasted on the north peak into May. The *Blue Guide* says climbers can go up the east approach in a "difficult" twelve hours. I settled for a stay at a lodge on the south slope that was said to offer "a good area for walking and for botanists."

The walk, along a dirt road girdling this sector of the mountain, was impressive; glimpses of other mountains opened through the trees like keyholes to infinity. But I was stopped in less than an hour by a dog fiercely guarding the sheep under its care, which had straggled across the path on their way back from pasture. Arcadia's up-and-down landscape is,

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by and large, for pasturing, not plowing. Ancient Greeks called the Arcadians "acorn eaters," a scornful epithet meaning they were so agriculturally primitive that they did not know how to grow staple grains. (Eating sheep was also considered backward by the Greeks, who were not regular meat eaters.) When northern Arcadians called their region Azanry (after Azan, a son of Arcas), other Greeks said it should be Brazenry—meaning its land was as uncultivable as brass.

What I found this first evening while walking I would afterward experience whenever I drove the rough little back roads of Arcadia: one must be prepared, early and late in the day, to wait for the sheep or goats to get where they are going. On the very next morning, while stopped behind a bickering flow of horned billies and hornless kids, I glanced to the right, into the low sun of morning, and felt my heart stop a second as Pan himself returned my gaze. A careful second look reminded me of something I once knew but had long forgotten—that goats can stand on their hind feet, like dogs. But they have a higher, slimmer profile when they do. What I had seen was a kid on its hind legs slowly pawing a branch as it grazed its buds. This trick of turning biped, along with the sly look some goats contrive at times, no doubt contributed to a vivid apprehension of Pan's nearness in the Arcadian cult. In the iconography of the god, he is often shown as "spying Pan," turning a quick intense glance on the viewer, lifting at times a hand (or hoof) to shade his eyes from the bright sun. He has the sprightliness of his half-goat nature. The *Homeric Hymn to Pan* called him

> Quick on the cliffs where scampering goats are seen.

As I watched the herds being rounded up and moved along, mostly by old women who used the ancient shepherd's crook as a very practical tool, I saw that real Arcadians do not, like Virgil's, lie in the shade and talk to the sheep (who mourn their master's unhappy love life as dolefully as the lachrymose mountains). Here is the way Virgil's herdsman puts his flock away for the night:

> The Evening Star! Go, satyrs! Go home, goats.

Goats are as easily summoned to mind, and as easily dismissed, as imaginary satyrs.

Near the western base of Cyllene is another part of the map Milton's "Arcades" gave me: the river Ladon, which Pausanias called "the loveliest river in Greece." Its springs, held in awe by the Arcadians, lie just five kilometers north of the village of Kalivia. Water erupts from the ground with great force throughout Arcadia, fed by streams forced down hidden mountain clefts. Ladon's springs leap to get away from their source,

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clattering over rocks with a sound like the clunking of the sheep bells higher up the hill. Milton calls the river "sandy Ladon." Why? I checked it at various places downstream during my week here, and not a grain of sand did I see. Where did Milton get his adjective? Not from the land itself, of course, but from another poet, Ovid—who also never saw Arcadia.

Ovid seems to have wanted sand because the myth he knew called for oat reeds to be growing beside a river. Pan's emblematic Arcadian invention, his pipe, was taken from reeds on the margin of the Ladon. According to the *Metamorphoses*, the randy god had chased a nymph named Syrinx, famous for her song. To escape him, she plunged to her death in the Ladon. When reeds near the spot seemed to mourn her, he used them for a song of his own:

> For while he sighed, the wind wrought from the reeds
> A soft resisting music. He replied
> To this invention of an eerie sound:
> "Then I shall sing back on your own new terms!"
> He waxed together reeds of different lengths
> And gave his instrument the lost nymph's name.

Pan is also the patron of Arcadian bees, who lend him their wax so he can play a "honeyed" song. It is an unearthly kind of music, one that drives people mad, as the eighteenth century's glass harmonica was reported to do. Only by a god's miracle could a melody actually be played through limp oaten reeds—which seems to be the point of Pan's own performance. But Virgil took it for granted that any shepherd can do what Pan can do:

> Play, Tityrus, oaten musings about trees.

Other poets blindly followed this example. In his *Shepherd's Calendar,* Spenser talked of the herdsman's "oaten pipe." Shakespeare's song in *Love's Labour's Lost* has a stanza beginning: "When shepherds pipe on oaten straws . . ." Milton talked of the "pastoral reed with oaten stop" in *Comus,* and of "rural ditties" being "temper'd to the oaten flute" in *Lycidas.* In fact, in the last work, when he wished to move on to more serious poetry, he said: "But now my oat proceeds . . ." Pope had the same thing in mind when he wrote: "O let my Muse her slender reed inspire." All this miraculous stuff came, supposedly, from the non-sandy Ladon.

Just under Cyllene's southern slope lies the Stymphalian marsh, which Hercules dammed and drained when he killed the man-eating Stymphalian birds. Backward Arcadia obviously had special need of his

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"civilizing" labors. Of his twelve famous tasks, Hercules performed the first six in Arcadia or on its borders. He slew the giant boar on Cyllene's brother mountain, Erymanthus. He captured Diana's magic deer beside the river Ladon. He diverted the river Alpheus to clean the stables of Augeas, king of Elis. He killed the "arrow-proof" lion in Nemea and the many-headed hydra in Lerna—both towns on the eastern boundary of Arcadia. The Greeks' own picture of Arcadia is authentically reflected not in Virgil's lounging flute players but in the dread efforts the region summoned from this toughest of demigods.

The marsh at Stymphalus was typical of Arcadia's ancient problems. Mountainous as it is, Arcadia does have some valleys silted up with alluvial soil. But until modern times, flooding made them difficult to farm. Aridity is a problem for much of Greece, but Arcadia more often suffered from too much water. The *Homeric Hymn to Pan* called Arcadia "thick with rills"; the red clay of the valleys clogged natural fissures in the limestone underneath. When water was trapped in the huge bowls formed by the mountains, the Arcadians did not have the tools or technology to break through these rocky containers, or to keep and control the amount of water they needed. Today, a dam downstream of the Ladon has formed a beautiful lake, harnessing the river to produce electricity. The lake, elbowing its way in and around abrupt mountain angles, looks like a Scottish loch—but it was warm when I put my hand in it, and the red clay gave a bloody tint to its margins. I have little doubt that Ovid could have made more of *that*, in terms of myth, than of his nonexistent sand.

The Arcadian poets had their own hydraulic system, one that gave them just the right touch of rain (or shade or sun) in just the right places:

> Phyllis, arriving, brightens all our leaves,
> Zeus ripples his approval in glad showers.

Here Virgil launched what has been called the "where-e'er you walk" convention, after some lines in Pope's *Pastorals:*

> Where-e'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade.
> Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade.

Ben Jonson had already used the device in a pastoral play, *The Sad Shepherd:*

> The world may find the Spring by following her.

For such poets, the whole of meteorology depends on the route of a

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Phyllis or an Amaryllis. Nature, grand in other genres, in pastoral is tiresomely nice—which is the last thing one could call Arcadia.

North Arcadia's westward mountain, Erymanthus, the home of Hercules' boar, has ancient ruins at its base, where three rivers meet; but the most imposing spot I visited is on a peak just to the east, one oriented toward Erymanthus's cult sites. This is ancient Mount Aphrodisium, reached via a single-track dirt road that zigzags up from the modern village of Paos. A temple area was uncovered here in 1967 beside a Greek Orthodox chapel of Saint Peter. Everywhere in this place of holy mountains, pagans and Christians have sought similar traffic with the gods on heights.

You feel cut off from the world below, intimidatingly intimate with the endless space above. In three directions from Mount Aphrodisium, you see serried peaks, ridges overlooking ridges. By late afternoon, shadowed parts of nearby mountains seem to recede, while brightly lit points beyond them spring forward in the liquid air, playing tricks with space. These mountains are heavy with permanence. Yet they also seem to shift about, in angles they create, to block or open up vistas—to show, all at once, similar heights in differing atmospheres. The result is a psychological effect that might be called "mountain dissociation." The religious experience of these mountains is what is most essential to Arcadia and most absent from Arcadian poetry. This is the land of the sublime, which is always a bit scary, not of the beautiful, which tends to be sedate. The pastoral landscape is what the Romans called a *locus amoenus,* an "agreeable place" (we get "amenities" from *amoenus*). But Arcadia does not accommodate. It challenges. You are disoriented here on Mount Aphrodisium, the necessary preliminary to reorientation in the rituals that were once performed in such out-of-the-way and hard-to-reach places.

A gorge more accessible, and often walked, lies in the middle of Arcadia, where the river Lusius gouges its way through cliffs into which famous monasteries have been built, facing each other over the cut. I began at the New Monastery of the Philosophers—called "New" because you descend the gorge past the old monastery, now deserted, called the Hidden School. The New Monastery looked deserted as well. Its little church was closed, though water and Greek sweets were set out in the small residence's open parlor. It was a precipitous walk of twenty minutes down to the river, and a panting forty minutes back up. There is a little concrete mule bridge over the Lusius, and another forty minutes would have taken me up the opposite cliff, to the monastery of John the Forerunner. I was content to see the famous river where Zeus was bathed by his nurses—*Lusius* means "bathing"—after his birth on nearby Mount Lycaeus. The water bounces through large boulders here, then

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whitens back in a dead-end pool and lashes sideways toward an oblique escape—an appropriate cracking of the earth for the high god's baby bathtub.

When I climbed back streaming sweat at noon (bad choice of time), a monk had made an appearance at the Monastery of the Philosophers, and he brought out a fresh bottle of water from the refrigerator. The one man who lives here was in the nearby town of Dhimitsana getting supplies, so the monk had driven his van over the long twisting roads from John the Forerunner, the other, more popular monastery—though he was quick to tell me that the Philosophers' old site below was the historically most important building in the area. It had trained over a dozen patriarchs who served in Constantinople. Though the Forerunner monastery is larger and more picturesque than this one, it is seen to better advantage from here, since it is built into the cliffside like a honeycomb in a cleft. Looking from this side (especially with binoculars, everywhere helpful in this place of distant heights and depths), you see the sheer drop that enables the monks to live like the old stylite saints, suspended in air.

The ruins of ancient Gortys are nearby: acropolis high on a cliff, healing center (Asclepieion) below by the rush of the Lusius. When I wound my car down to that site, I met a camping group that had pitched its tent by the river's noise. The Alpheus, an even more historic river that winds its endless way through pastoral poems, lies just below. (It was put to earlier, rough use, remember, for cleaning the Augean stables.) Milton told this stream's best-known story in his learned shorthand. In his "Arcades," an Arcadian is greeted with these words:

> Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
> Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
> Divine Alpheus, who by secret sluice,
> Stole underseas to meet his Arethuse.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Milton's source, told the tale more straightforwardly. It is another of those fleeing-nymph stories, combined with the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't nature of Arcadian rivers. The river god Alpheus chases Arethusa, who *becomes* a river to *escape* a river. A deep plunge actually takes her, shooting under the Mediterranean, all the way to Sicily. Before that, however, her flight on land gives us another Arcadian geography lesson from a man who never saw Arcadia. Arethusa is speaking:

> Orchomenus I sped by, Psophis, high
> Cyllene—through the clefts of Maenalus
> Past wintry Erymanthus into Elis.

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She avoids the Alpheus, you see. But we must cross it now, into the southwest corner of Arcadia, where the oldest and darkest shrines are, where beast gods linger from primordial times. An appropriate gorge offers itself for another walk, where the river Neda shapes a tunnel. Neda was the name of Zeus's nurse, who guarded him as a baby and as a reward became a river. (Women were hydrotropic in Arcadia.) The most famous site in this area is the preserved Doric temple of Apollo the Rescuer, called that because he saved the Arcadians from a famous plague. Pausanias says the Arcadians believe the temple was designed by Ictinus, who built the Parthenon in Athens. If so, it is an earlier yet powerful vision. Its power remains to this day, even under the huge protective tent that has been erected over it—a replacement for the scaffolding that previously put collars on the columns, tilted at perilous angles by earthquakes.

The inner cell of this temple has a highly unusual side door opening east. One guess is that it was meant to look toward Mount Lycaeus, where there was another shrine to Apollo the Rescuer. The main feature of Lycaeus was an altar on the very peak, where the secret rites of Wolf-Zeus were celebrated. By car, it is a long and nervous climb up the one-track road. I began to worry, halfway up, that I would have to change a tire here (a sharp rock on just such a road had caused a blowout the day before), alone, on a tricky slope. But when I reached the top, where an artificial mound marks the site of the ancient altar, I saw a tanned man, fortyish, seated coolly in the hammering sun, watching bees go by. From time to time he would whip out a net, catch a bee, extract it with his fingers, study it, and then let it go.

I observed this as I climbed the conical summit. The man told me that he was working. He came here often, and to all the other mountains of the area, since he was writing a definitive survey of the bees of the Peloponnese. The last such effort was made in the nineteenth century, and those data are now obsolete. How many species are there in the region? He was still counting, and thought the number might reach fifteen hundred.

Bees are one thing that the poets got right: they are everywhere. Virgil tells of "shrubs murmurous with bees, inducing sleep." My entomologist loved Lycaeus best of all, since here he discovered a bee specimen thought not to exist outside the Caucasus: the *Megachile diabolica.* He caught me one and, turning her over delicately, showed me the purple pollen pulsing in her sac. "They like only this purple plant," he explained. He wished he could show me a male—"They are more gorgeous"—but the males don't like the very top of the mountain.

In all the years he had come here, he had never before seen an American on this mountain. When he said this, in a marked German

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accent, I realized that every visitor I had seen in Arcadia's rural area (which is most of it) had been German too—the campers at Gortys; a bicyclist who had underestimated the mountains' challenge; a young couple with a baby; an elderly married couple who were meticulously following in the footsteps of Pausanias.

Lycaeus, in Arcadia's southwest corner, offers a stunning panorama of the whole region. I looked north to my starting place, Cyllene. Off to the east was Maenalus, holding the other corner of the south. "Beautiful here," the beeman said, "though not so nice before." The cone we stood on has meters of built-up cinders and bones from hundreds of years of sacrifice. My companion reached down to pick up a sliver of what looked like petrified honeycomb, and when he gave it to me, I put it in my pocket. It was not the work of his bee friends. "Bone," he said. "Maybe animal. Maybe human." On that he was wrong, however. Archaeologists have made a careful search of the place, but no human bones have turned up. Though the ancient Greeks firmly believed that human sacrifice continued here throughout classical antiquity, modern scholars such as Walter Burkert think the myth of sacrifice was a "founding tale" to explain an annual rite that declared one person a "werewolf" for the next seven years, a victim of Wolf-Zeus but also sacred to him, obliged to live away from human sight until the end of the term and then be miraculously restored to the community. The secrecy of the rites, based on their primordial continuity with the past, made everyone from Plato down to Pausanias assume the worst of their celebrants. This was, after all, the corner of Arcadia most tenacious of its various beast gods—Demeter with a horse's head; Eurynome with a fish's tail; for that matter, Pan with his goat hoofs and horns. No wonder other Greeks called Arcadians "folk older than the moon" and treated them the way some American sophisticates treat people who hail from those parts of the Ozarks that still shelter snake handlers and glossolalists.

Pan had a temple (not yet found by modern archaeologists) on the side of Mount Lycaeus. But he was not so much Zeus's subordinate here as his partner. When the Arcadian League was formed in 370 B.C. to oppose Spartan pressures from the south, the newly minted coins showed Wolf-Zeus on one side and a dignified Pan, throned, on the other side. Pan's priest also presided every other year at the Lycaean Games, alternating with the priest of Zeus. Pausanias tells us that, after the Olympics, these games were the oldest in Greece. They were celebrated at a hippodrome on a flat place near the mountain's peak. I looked down on it with the beeman, who had parked his van there. It had been newly resurfaced in preparation for local games that were to be held there later in the summer. The billboards announcing this event, placed on the lower slopes, had a large Pan affixed to the top of the billboard, playing his pipe.

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From the southwest corner I went east to the most populous part of Arcadia. Here is Megalopolis, an ancient city formed from the merger of half a hundred villages that needed protection from Sparta. Megalopolis is hardly an industrial center, but it is as ugly as one. There are Three Mile Island–style nuclear converters that announce, ominously, that the dammed waters of Ladon cannot meet all of Arcadia's power needs. In the ruins of a famous temple at Lycosura, shadowed by steam clouds from the converters, lie colossal statues of Persephone and Demeter, sculpted by Damophon in the second century B.C. The heads are plaster casts, since the originals were removed to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

North of Megalopolis is another "merged" town, Tripolis, the modern capital of Arcadia, with busy and noisy squares and the first large group of young Arcadians I had seen since I came here. I had gone to Magouliana, the hometown of a man I had met in Athens, because he told me the church contained a beautifully carved wooden icon-stand. But the church was locked, and I could not turn up a single person to help me get in.

When I recounted this on my return to Athens, the man from Magouliana told me, "Yes, they are all gone. There is no way of making a living there." Before my trip to Arcadia, he had praised his region's beauty with genuine emotion. Now I asked him if he would ever return. "I can't. There is no way." He was like the mercenaries Hermippus wrote about twenty-five hundred years ago, unable to feed themselves from Arcadia's beautiful but cruel mountain heights. The whole area is sparsely populated. The only people visible in most places are shepherds and goatherds at work. And the breathtaking grandeur of the country cannot distract one from its disheartening poverty. When I ate lunch in a Tripolis tavern, a woman off the street begged for the uneaten part of my meal.

This is pastoral "Arcady"? Pan was no Disney creature frisking about. He was majestic in his willfulness, slyness, and anger. One of his cult titles was Goatboy-Penetrator Pan—a title illustrated on a famous vase now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where Pan swoops after a goatherd preceded by several feet of his own phallus.

I thought of this Pan, the equivocal patron and penetrator, at the most resonant site in east Arcadia, my last stop. Here on the plain of Mantinea, Arcadians had fought three famous battles of antiquity—in 385 B.C., 362 B.C., and 222 B.C. Despite Pan's protection, they lost the first and third. Pan was a famous patron of war, a god on whom even the Athenians called when they needed help on the battlefield. Not that he ever wore armor or wielded a spear. Pan was valuable because he spread

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his eponymous "panic" through the ranks of one's foes. Euripedes, in the play *Rhesus,* said this fear makes men "tremble under Pan's whip." Panic comes on the eve of battle, as soldiers hear night noises and eerie echoes.

Mantinea lies at the base of Mount Maenalus, whose pines were often filled with Pan's noises. If there is any place where he should have protected the Arcadians, it is here. But even those who prayed for his assistance might have felt uneasy if they remembered how he won his power over the echoes that cause panic. Rebuffed in his pursuit of a singing nymph named Echo, Pan stirred his goatherds to animal frenzy, and they tore her limb from limb. Even her separated limbs still hummed with her song from their various burial sites—whence the echo. Virgil, as usual, prettified the weird noises heard from Mount Maenalus:

> Maenalian flutings play upon my pipe.
> The pines of Maenalus are musical
> And whisper herdsmen's amorous complaints—
> Or Pan's ache for his nymph now lost in reeds.

But in *The Way Things Are,* the skeptical Lucretius presented a different view of Pan the victimizer:

> For those who live in fields hear Pan far off—
> His goatface framed with pointed fronds of pine,
> He feathers his slim reeds with close-fit lips
> And fills the woods with his insistent syrinx.

Lucretius was mocking the way Pan holds the superstitious in thrall. But a very practical Roman author on military science, Aeneas Tacticus, wrote a chapter of his book *On Sieges* to counter the efficacy of what he called "panic—a word invented in the Peloponnese, more particularly in Arcadia."

The classical ruins at Mantinea lie in a field next to a weird modern Orthodox church, which looks like a Red Grooms version of the Venetian Gothic cathedral at Torcello. Mantinea's classical agora, with traces of lost temples, is just beyond a small ancient theater pocketed in a slope. The city, it appears, was very compact. But if you drive up the corkscrew road to an adjoining little peak, you can look down on the remains of what were once quite extensive walls, large enough to enclose far more than the population of ancient Mantinea would seem to justify. It is conjectured, plausibly, that they were meant to contain the Mantineans' real wealth—their flocks of goats and sheep—from enemies who would slaughter them.

The first defeat of the Mantineans came when the Spartans made a weapon of Arcadia's old enemy: water. They dammed the river Ophis and

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diverted its flow, in a seasonal spate, against the unbaked brick of the walls, which dissolved and fell. It is easy to imagine the panic of the penned-in herds, Pan's own goats spreading the disorientation of fear to their human companions. Pan was a dangerous friend.

Some trace of that menace lingers into later Arcadian visions, especially in the two Poussin paintings called *Et in Arcadia Ego.* That sentence has been mistranslated as "Even I have lived in Arcadia." (If that were an accurate translation, *et* would be in a different place.) In a 1936 essay, Erwin Panofsky proved that the line, inscribed on tombs, comes from an old tradition and is the voice of Death: "Even in Arcadia, I (Death) am present." One could fancy, at times, that the most truthful message would be, "*Especially* in Arcadia . . ."

Yet the harsh tales were hard to credit on the sweet June day, cooled by late afternoon breezes, when I walked the Mantinean fields. Near the old agora a herder was taking her goats home. From where I stood (sweat made me leave my glasses in the car, so I can't say for sure) she seemed young—at least, she was wearing a long dress, not the trousers most other women wear when working the herds. She looked, in the sunny haze, like a lady-in-waiting playing shepherdess at Marie Antoinette's court.

More astonishing, the ancient theater was set up for a play, its tiers of grass supplied with wooden benches above the few remaining ancient seats of stone. The set was created by bundles of mown hay, and the play recently performed there (spray cans and other paraphernalia of scene-setting were strewn about) had included, as a prop, a little hay wagon. The play must have been a pastoral one! The Arcadian poets win, after all. Their dream is only a dream, and that is its weakness, but it is also its strength. The dream of "Arcady" can be entertained anywhere—even in the real Arcadia.

It is tempting to cherish this as my last, least expected memory of Arcadia. But back in Athens I took out of my pocket the sliver of bone the beeman had given me on Mount Maenalus, part of a sacrifice made to Wolf-Zeus in a place no respectable Greeks wanted to recognize. Which is the real Arcadia? Pan knows; but if you ask him, he just laughs.

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Brancusi's Fish as a Figure of Thought

EMILY GROSHOLZ

He spent so many hours just polishing
its surfaces: two flanks
of mirror vastly dimmed
by Istrian refusal: the clenched fist,
averted glance of marble.

But smoothing made it more percipient:
the studio walls, each form
(all twelve of them) that neighbored
fleetingly gathered round into a space
unlimited but finite.

Heavy, two-sided, hydroleptic, oval:
so clearly what it is
(so clarified in shape)
and yet *in situ* vague:
arched and penetrated by reflection.

Just so a trout in sunlit
riverrun replays
the place it swims through on its rainbow scales:
unconscious of the way it furls and wears
the covenant of world.

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Listening to a Tidepool

Curiosity and the Unfamiliar

GEERAT J. VERMEIJ

There is nothing like the exhilaration of arriving in a new place with the expectation of coming across something unexpected. All the senses are primed, straining to take in signals from all sides. As a scientist deeply rooted in natural history, I depend on novelty to learn about the things I take for granted and to pose questions I would not previously have thought to ask. As a teacher, I want to create an environment in which curiosity and exploration flourish as essential tools for learning how the world works. Perhaps most of all, as a student of nature, I want people to be aware, to notice, and not to let the world go by unobserved and unappreciated.

I felt the familiar and welcome tension that comes with this heightened state of awareness as I eased myself into a quiet, knee-deep tidepool on Washington State's San Juan Island. My wife, Edith, and I had come to look for snails and hermit crabs whose shells I wanted to inspect and take back to the Friday Harbor Laboratories for further study. We would search as carefully as we could so as to disturb life in the pool as little as possible. Both of us wanted also to observe the habits of all the other creatures—the sea stars, sea anemones, barnacles, fish, and seaweeds—that together formed the community in which the pursuits of life were played out. In the comings and goings of the diverse inhabitants of that

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unspectacular bit of marine topography, we would surely spot something interesting, something to think about, apart from the explicit objects of our search.

My fingers, not yet numb and stiff from the frigid water, gently parted the small brown kelps whose crinkly blades floated up from holdfasts, the structures that anchored them to the rocky bottom. I have been blind since the age of three, so, by long custom, I touched and quickly identified each object I encountered with the side, palm, and fingers of my right hand. Speed mattered, not only because I should not tarry if the pebble was merely a pebble, but also because it might instead be something dangerous. Of course, even pebbles could prove interesting, for some of the encrusting animals that made their sedentary livings on the shells of host snails and hermit crabs might also grace the surfaces of inert pebbles. Therefore, each pebble received a quick tactile glance before I released it in favor of another.

When I came upon something that showed even a hint of spiral architecture, I guessed instantly that the object was a shell. A slight push or tug would indicate whether it belonged to its original owner, a snail, or whether a hermit crab had taken up residence. If it gave only a little, I concluded that it clung quite firmly to the rock surface and therefore was apt to be a snail. If, however, it wiggled more freely as I touched it, the owner of the shell was likely to be a hermit crab, which at some previous time had appropriated the shell from another hermit crab or had found an empty receptacle whose resident snail had died. As I picked up the shell, I could check my initial guess. The area around the opening of the shell would be smooth and well kept if the animal was a snail, and rough or broken if it was a crab, which, unlike the snail—whose fleshy mantle extracts lime from seawater to build and mend its shell—cannot repair its mobile home. Telltale spindly legs and a claw wriggling in the shell opening would clinch my identification of the creature as a hermit crab.

A somewhat unpromising object, at first touch, resembled a pebble, yet at the same time it bore some of the diagnostic coiling I associate with topshells. Bringing it out of the water for closer inspection, I could tell at once that the object was indeed a rather disheveled topshell with a large lump on its surface. That lump, a slipper limpet, was securely attached to its host shell, the shell margins of the limpet conforming perfectly to the irregular contour of the surface of the host hermit crab's topshell. As I held this little community in my hand, I felt the crab reach for my fingers for support, and then it was gone. Perhaps taking no chances, the crab had vacated its oddly unbalanced little house. I wasn't overly worried on its behalf. Within the tidepool's eclectic real estate, the crab would not take long to find another shell in which to lodge its soft abdomen, the most vulnerable part of its spirally twisted body.

Under a ledge, the side of my finger brushed against a slightly sharp-

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edged scalloped object. Crab, I thought to myself, a first impression that seemed to be confirmed as the object withdrew further beneath the ledge. Before any of this registered clearly in my mind, my hand drew back reflexively. Though not dangerous, a cornered crab can inflict a memorable bite if provoked. Better to be safe than risk a bloody finger. Let the crab apply its claws and its talents to some hapless shell-bearing prey.

My hand reached down against one of the steep walls of the pool. It confirmed what my nose had already guessed. Plastered against the rock face was a carpet of sponges, their surface characteristically yielding to the touch and, as my fingers slid over them, possessing the resistance of rubber. A large sea anemone, its round body much softer and smoother, graced the lip of the ledge overhanging the sponge-clad wall.

My ears, too, were engaged. I took in the repetitious calls of gulls flying overhead. The gentle, almost inaudible lapping of water on nearby rocks warned me that the level of my pool would soon rise for a moment as the remnants of a once-powerful wave dissipated on the shore. I straightened up from my bent posture in anticipation. Cold hands were a necessary inconvenience, but a wet shirt and face were avoidable. The water subsided as quickly and as silently as it had risen, and I bent over once again to resume my explorations.

The scene, though new in its particulars, was nonetheless deeply familiar to me. I had been to many pools like this one, and I knew what to expect. Or did I? On that day in 1986, I was struck not by what I observed but by what I did not observe. It was the silence of the serene pool that made me pause. Two decades earlier, on my first visit to a rock pool in Maine, such silence would have been a matter of course, an unquestioned circumstance to be expected from my previous experience on cold shores. But as I crouched in the chilly waters of San Juan Island, I was no longer the same person who had explored the tidepools of Maine. The ears that heard the gulls and the rising water had also listened to the sounds of tropical shores.

Just two weeks earlier, on the reef flats and in the mangrove swamps of Fiji, I had been greeted by the muffled pops of snapping shrimps as they explosively shut their claws in burrows beneath my feet. The snapping—the thwack of the claws' thumbs against their palms in a sudden movement facilitated by a special "trigger" at the joint—presumably enables the shrimps to catch prey, but it may also help them select mates or serve as a signal of competitive prowess. There is a profusion of snapping shrimps throughout the marine tropics, and their bubble-gum-popping sounds are a familiar signature of the richness of life so characteristic of tropical waters.

Snapping shrimps weren't the only noisy creatures that were missing from my rock pool. There were no noisy hermit crabs. In Fiji, as in other

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parts of the tropical western Pacific, I could hold a shell occupied by a hermit crab up to my ear and hear a distinct croaking or rasping produced as specialized ridges on the claws rubbed against the crab's carapace. The shell interiors even seemed to amplify the sound. Why, by contrast, did the cold-water crabs go about their business in silence? I asked myself that question as I clambered out of one pool into another in search of more silent animals.

This was perhaps not the question that would rise to the top of my research agenda, but the observation that led to it fit into a larger picture that was taking shape in my mind. The production of sound, like other activities, requires energy, and the ability to perform biological work depends on temperature. Just as cold hands grip less firmly and move more slowly than warm hands, so the act of producing sound in animals whose temperature matches that of their surroundings may be energetically more expensive in frigid waters than in warm ones. The absence of noisy crustaceans in my pool was therefore one of many indications that certain energy-intensive modes of life and methods of communication are energetically prohibited, or at least thermally more challenging, at low temperatures. The tidepool was silent because it was cold.

I arrived at this conclusion because, for neither the first nor the last time, I had found myself puzzled by things I had once taken for granted. As a boy, I did not question why the shells that washed up on the Dutch beaches near my family's home were chalky, but when I was confronted with the elegantly complex, smooth-textured shells fashioned by snails and clams in Florida and other warm regions, the chalkiness became a matter of wonder. As an adult, I might not have begun to think about how prey and predator have interacted over evolutionary time if I had not observed firsthand the fossil shells of snails that lived hundreds of millions of years ago. The architecture of these fossils contrasts strongly with that of the shells predominant in modern seas in ways that made me wonder if the enemies of ancient creatures were much less powerful than the enemies of their counterparts today. A significant amount of my work ended up revolving around that question.

The excursion to the pool—in particular, the unexpected light that Fiji shed on Washington State—reminded me that in order to understand the familiar, we must experience the unfamiliar. Circumstances are familiar mostly because we are used to them, not because we understand them. We need novelty to jar us out of our intellectual complacency and into a scientific frame of mind, one in which we are open to observation and free to recognize and ultimately to solve puzzles. We may not follow up every observation or answer every question, but the mere act of observing, of questioning, of comparing what we sense with our previous experience, is the essence of curiosity. It presupposes that the observer is

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free from dogma, as well as from the illusion that everything has been explained and everything makes sense.

I am hardly alone in my dependence on novelty. Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace might not have proposed their theory of evolution had they stayed in Great Britain, where they were both born. Both were keen observers, but they had to travel to South America, the Galápagos Islands, and the Malay Archipelago in order to place the natural history of their home country in perspective. Both Darwin and Wallace witnessed organisms struggling for life in the tropics to a degree they had not seen at home. They were impressed and puzzled by the richness of species and by the patterns of variation among localities. Subtle differences among similar species from adjacent islands in the Galápagos, for example, made Darwin realize that species are not immutable entities. Tens of thousands of creative scientists have had similar awakenings when they ventured beyond the familiar. How odd, then, that observation counts for so little in education in general, and in the training of scientists in particular.

In science, it has been traditional in American universities to push graduate students toward formulating a hypothesis very early in their careers. Based on what they are taught in courses and what they read in recent journal articles, beginning students are urged to come up with testable ideas and, almost immediately thereafter, with the experimental designs necessary for their evaluation. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with hypotheses or tests. In fact, subjecting ideas to rigorous scrutiny by collecting evidence is the methodology through which poor or weak explanations are discarded in favor of better or stronger ones, much as natural selection plays an evolutionary role in functional design. What is often forgotten in this process, however, is that a hypothesis ultimately derives from a question, which may itself rest on observations that, for one reason or another, don't make sense. A process of aimless discovery and wonder must precede the more disciplined, more directed acquisition of scientific knowledge.

Why is it important for me, as an evolutionary biologist and paleontologist, to observe nature firsthand and first-ear? I could simply read books or, to be precise in my case, to have books read to me, and I would surely come away with some thought-provoking ideas about nature. I do in fact spend a great deal of time reading, and this is wonderfully stimulating; but it does not suffice. I would have been unable to learn from books that cold-temperate tidepools are silent. Similarly, the scientific literature would have given me no clue about how strikingly the thin shells of snails on the shores of the Aleutian Islands contrast with the much thicker shells of the same species in the Pacific Northwest. I discovered this fact only by visiting both places. And if I had relied exclusively on the published literature for my studies of the evolution of shell char-

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acters, I would have been seriously misled on many occasions, and many interesting questions and hypotheses would never have occurred to me. My own research collections and the holdings of the world's great museums have enabled me to make my own assessments and to discover a great deal that others had either taken for granted or simply failed to notice. Perhaps most importantly, I can observe organisms or their remains in contexts that others have not. The animals I study are not merely names to be counted or abstract entities to be atomized. Instead, they are pieces of pleasing, functional architecture, and, if they are to be fully understood, they must be studied as part of the world in which they grow, survive, reproduce, and evolve.

Educators have puzzled for decades over how to teach "science." All too often, they—we, *I,* if the truth be told—forget that the first step toward the development of a scientific frame of mind is to awaken and then to nurture curiosity. Because observation is so inextricably linked to curiosity, we must do everything we can to foster a keener awareness of what surrounds us. I know of no better way to accomplish this than by training the senses.

Because I lost my sight at such an early age, it did not take me long to become acutely aware that vision constitutes the primary means by which people perceive their surroundings. Teachers and educational theorists too often gear instruction exclusively to visual learning. With such single-mindedness, they fail to draw out the pleasure and complementary roles of our other senses. When we observe, we must harness all our sensory equipment to the task. Discovery is more powerful, more memorable, when we can experience something in more than one dimension. A flower is beautiful to look at, but the full impact of its beauty and of the role it plays in its biological community comes when we also perceive the velvety texture of its petals and the fragrance that attracts pollinating insects or bats. Not all of us have the full complement of senses, and few among us can hear the ultrasonic messages of bats flying at dusk or see the ultraviolet signposts that attract bees to flowers; but we use what we can. My lack of sight may have enabled me to notice some details that other observers, depending so completely on their eyes, would have overlooked. Listening to a tidepool, though it is a familiar activity for me, is, within the larger context of my field, an unfamiliar approach, and therefore one that occasionally yields a useful surprise.

Everyone knows that children are "naturally" curious and that much of this inquisitiveness evaporates during the school years. Whether by design or otherwise, the school for the blind I attended in the Netherlands dispensed with grades. I felt driven to perform well for fear of being ostracized, but at the same time the study of nature remained one of pure and pleasurable discovery, untainted by the ever-present threat of

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tests. I sensed the same relief when I took a few courses pass-fail at college. Systematic assessment of performance cannot be eliminated, but I fear that our increasing emphasis on tests and grades is robbing many young people of the intrinsic satisfactions of learning. Insofar as it is possible, students should be spared the curiosity-killing ravages of excessive evaluation.

The role of the unfamiliar to stimulate the mind has long been appreciated by educators. The way in which the unfamiliar is presented, however, often obscures its intended message. I remember all too well my elementary school class trips to museums. We would arrive as a chaotic horde, everyone talking incessantly and paying attention to each other instead of to the exhibits. My experience with most field trips in college classes, and even with most scientific meetings, is similar. I find that my powers of observation are greatest when I am alone or in the company of one or two other good observers, such as my wife and my daughter. Only then is the power of concentration stimulated rather than overwhelmed by the impulse to converse or to engage in social interplay. The lesson of the unfamiliar demands our undivided attention.

As a natural historian, I have cause to worry about the future of this style of inquiry. With the unprecedented expansion of the human population and our even faster depletion of the world's resources, ecosystems in which we can roam unaccompanied and unsupervised are disappearing, and many have become so degraded and so homogenized that they have lost the uniqueness that would once have arrested our attention. Life in gritty metropolises and manicured suburbs divorces most of us not only from the everyday lives of creatures in the wild, but also from unaltered geological landscapes, from the stars in the sky, even from the weather. The places in which we can awaken our curiosity by observing nature are becoming ever more remote. As a result of these changes, we have become incompetent noticers. I silently grieve when companions do not hear the song sparrow singing in the tree or fail to sense the direction from which the wind is blowing. With such self-absorption comes resignation, as well as the unwillingness and eventually the inability to understand the wider world of which we remain a part.

Along with all the other economic and aesthetic reasons for preserving nature, there is a compelling case to be made for its role as a wellspring of intellectual stimulation. In a homogeneous, human-dominated world, there is little opportunity for nature to surprise us. True, there remain the great puzzles of the structure of the universe, the origin of life, the nature of matter, and the evolution of consciousness, but by the time we are ready to address these questions, we shall not have been prepared for the task by what we have learned from simpler observations as curious neophytes. We must let others, too, listen to the tidepool.

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PHILIP LEVINE

Orphans

The field mouse in his little gray cape
has been walking the night playground
beside me as I gaze upward at stars
puzzling this way and that. The long day
at last has come to a close; the darkness
rising from the grass sighs with relief,
the quarter moon stumbles out from behind
a ghostly cloud, surveys the scene, and returns.
At just this point a spirit with a name
should settle on my left shoulder to whisper
the night's first great truth, and thus, humbled,
I would respond from deep in my soul.
I stop and listen. I can hear cars
speeding on the nearby streets, a truck
backfire and stall. My own mind backfires.
Sixty years ago a Mrs. Morton
made me kneel beside my bed to pray
that if I died before I woke her god
my soul would take. I had planned to sleep

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until morning and wake in sunlight,
but now death, god, and the soul entered
the scheme, according to Mrs. Morton.
"Take my soul?" I asked looking up
into her talcumed face. "Take your soul!"
she repeated, her wet teeth gleaming
with religious light. My two clasped hands,
my knees aching on the bare wood floor,
my eyes closed on my mind's shooting stars,
all these were actual, like the bad breath
of Mrs. Morton, the diamond rings
she wore, the dyed blond hair, snooded,
the gartered thighs I tried never to see.
Thus it was determined in childhood
I would walk on crushed grass this evening
seeking counsel from the quarter moon,
the starry skies in their confusion,
my friend, the somber field mouse, silent,
wise, an orphaned spirit like my own.

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Night Words

after Juan Ramon

A child wakens in a cold apartment.
The windows are frosted. Outside he hears
words rising from the streets, words he cannot
understand, and then the semis gear down
for the traffic light on Houston. He sleeps
again and dreams of another city
on a high hill above a wide river
bathed in sunlight, and the dream is his life
as he will live it twenty years from now.
No, no, you say, dreams do not work that way,
they function otherwise. Perhaps in the world
you're right, but on Houston tonight two men
are trying to change a tire as snow gathers
on their shoulders and scalds their ungloved hands.
The older one, the father, is close to tears,
for he's sure his son who's drunk is laughing
secretly at him for all his failures
as a man and a father, and he is
laughing to himself, but because he's happy
to be alone with his father as he was
years ago in another life where snow
never fell. At last he slips the tire iron
gently from his father's grip and kneels down
in the unstained snow and unbolts the wheel
while he sings of drinking a glass of wine,
the black common wine of Alicante,
in raw sunlight. Now the father joins in,
and the words rise between the falling flakes
only to be transformed into the music
spreading slowly over the oiled surface
of the river that runs through every child's dreams.

Philip Levine's most recent book, *The Simple Truth*, won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 1995. He will teach at New York University this fall.

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The King's Lobbyists

ADAM HOCHSCHILD

In the last few years, as accusations of influence buying by Asian businessmen have swirled around Washington, politicians and editorial writers have indignantly denounced foreign meddling in American politics. From their tone, you might think that this is something new. Not so. The single most successful and far-reaching lobbying campaign by a foreigner took place in Washington more than a hundred years ago. Its second act followed two decades later and failed as spectacularly as the first act had succeeded. Few novelists could have invented a more colorful cast of characters: a former Confederate brigadier general, a dapper man-about-town who frittered away his inherited fortune on a series of foolish investments, a three-hundred-pound San Francisco lawyer, and an ambitious king. And the denouement of the drama involved that very contemporary Washington event: a leak.

The story begins on April 5, 1883, when President Chester A. Arthur boarded a private car lent to him by the Pennsylvania Railroad and headed south for a vacation. Traveling with the president as he left Washington were the secretary of the navy; Arthur's valet; his personal secretary; and his French chef, whom a journalist on the train described as "a gentleman with a well-developed waist . . . evidently a good feeder." A friend of the president's was also on board, and several of his late wife's cousins joined the party as the train rolled south. After Petersburg, Virginia, as the private car moved onto the tracks of a new railroad, a gray-bearded conductor provoked great hilarity by walking into the car, count-

Adam Hochschild's book *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, from which this article is drawn, will be published by Houghton Mifflin in September. His last book, *Finding the Trapdoor*, won the PEN/Spielvogel-Diamonstein Award for the most distinguished collection of essays published in 1997.

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ing the passengers, and trying to collect $47.50 in fares. A telegram ordering him to let the presidential party travel gratis was waiting at the next stop.

In Jacksonville, Florida, the president and his entourage boarded a paddle-wheel steamer and headed up the winding Saint Johns River. The following day, the steamer tied up about thirty-five miles northeast of today's Disney World, where the party climbed into carriages to visit the elegant mansion house of the Belair orange plantation. There they tasted several varieties of prize oranges, and the secretary of the navy climbed a tree to pick some that particularly caught his eye.

One of the more forgettable of American presidents, Chester A. Arthur was an amiable man whose most elevated post, before political connections won him the vice presidential seat, had been collector of customs revenue of the port of New York—a position from which he had been forced to resign amid charges of corruption and mismanagement. To near-universal dismay, he had entered the White House when President James A. Garfield died from an assassin's bullet. A good storyteller with muttonchop whiskers, Arthur was fond of whiskey, cigars, and expensive clothes; he is perhaps best remembered for saying, "I may be President of the United States, but my private life is nobody's damned business." On this trip to Florida, however, the president's private life fitted very nicely into the plans for someone else's business—business that was to have immense consequences half a world away.

The owner of the Belair orange plantation was General Henry Shelton Sanford, a wealthy, Connecticut-born aristocrat. Sanford lived in Belgium, where he had first moved more than two decades earlier, appointed by Abraham Lincoln as U.S. minister to Brussels. He had stayed on there long after his tenure as a diplomat came to an end. Sanford did not even bother to come to Florida for the presidential visit, but rather, with the self-assurance of the very rich, played host in absentia. He made sure that the president and his party were greeted by his personal agent and that they got the best rooms at the Sanford House hotel, which stood on a palm-fringed lakeshore in the town of Sanford. When the president and his guests were not out catching bass, trout, and catfish, or shooting alligators, the Sanford House was where they stayed for the better part of a week. There is no record of who paid the hotel bill, but most likely, as with the rail journey south, it was not the president.

With his stovepipe hat, gold-headed cane, pince-nez, and handsome chestnut beard—and his famously beautiful and much younger wife—General Sanford cut a dashing figure on both sides of the Atlantic. He had never actually been a general, however: the title, along with a sword and a blue and gold uniform, were a reward for giving a battery of

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cannons to an infantry regiment during the Civil War. As with his military rank, Sanford's prowess as a financier was less than met the eye. He had the elegance of someone who had grown up with a fortune, but he lacked the necessary acumen to make one. He never recovered large sums he had put into various odd patents—for a wool loom, a whiskey still, and a little box designed to lubricate railroad car axles with water instead of oil. A silver mine in Nevada and a zinc mine in Arkansas proved disastrous. A Minnesota railroad he invested in went bankrupt. His cotton crop at a South Carolina plantation was devoured by caterpillars. Although President Arthur and his party did not know it, the huge Florida orange plantation they so admired was heading for insolvency as rapidly as Sanford's other holdings. Some of his Swedish contract laborers found conditions too harsh and tried to leave as stowaways on a steamboat. Foremen failed to put up fences and wandering cattle nibbled at the orange trees. A local slaughterhouse Sanford put money into had a capacity fifty times larger than what the local market could consume.

From his château outside Brussels, the worried Sanford saw his inherited fortune gradually draining away. As this happened, something that loomed ever larger for him was his connection to the Belgian royal family. Like many Americans, he had a fondness for monarchy, and he was proud to be a friend of Belgium's king, Leopold II. Sanford even named one of his sons Leopold. Always a shrewd judge of people, the king understood what royal flattery meant to Sanford and suspected that someday he could use him. After Sanford failed in one of many fruitless efforts to win another American diplomatic post, a courtier of Leopold's wrote him, "The King is pleased that you will continue to reside among us where everyone loves and appreciates you." Leopold valued him, Sanford felt, in a way that his own country did not.

During these years, the European "Scramble for Africa" was just beginning, and Leopold eagerly wanted an African colony for himself. In 1878, he struck a deal with the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, who had recently completed an epochal trans-African trek. Leopold had eagerly followed the news of these travels, and during the explorer's triumphant journey home to England, the king had secretly dispatched Henry Sanford to intercept Stanley in France and offer him a job.

Sanford's efforts had eventually borne fruit. In 1879, Stanley began a five-year stint as Leopold's man in Africa, setting up trading posts and military bases, and threatening or bamboozling several hundred chiefs into signing over their land to the king. The claim that Stanley staked out for Leopold essentially comprised the huge swath of territory that is today, after a recent twenty-six-year interlude as Zaire, once again known as the Congo.

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Leopold then faced the problem of getting the other European countries to recognize his enormous claim. Several of the larger powers now had African ambitions of their own, and he knew that none of them would be eager to accept the Congo as his colony. But diplomatic recognition is partly a matter of precedent. Once one major country recognizes another's existence, other nations are far more likely to fall into line. If no major European country took this crucial first step, Leopold would look elsewhere. Unnoticed on his home continent, he decided to make a dazzling end run around Europe and set his sights on the United States. Hence the significance of President Arthur's trip to the Florida plantation of Leopold's friend, General Sanford.

Although everything Sanford touched as a businessman turned to dust, as a royal accomplice he was a grand success. After the Florida trip, confident that President Arthur would pay attention, Sanford wrote to him about Leopold's generous plans to bring civilization to Africa. Later the same year, Leopold sent Sanford across the Atlantic to make use of his convenient connection to the White House. The man who had once been American minister to Belgium was now the Belgian king's personal envoy to Washington.

Sanford carried with him a letter to the president from the king, which he had carefully edited and translated in Brussels. "Entire territories ceded by Sovereign Chiefs have been constituted by us into independent States," Leopold declared, a claim that would have startled Stanley, then still hacking out clearings for trading posts on the Congo River. Sanford also carried a special code for telegraphing lobbying bulletins to Brussels. *Constance* meant "negotiations proceeding satisfactorily; success expected"; *Achille* referred to Stanley, *Alice* to the United States, *Joseph* to "sovereign rights," and *Emile* to the key target, the president. *Bonheur* meant "agreement signed today." The agreement Leopold wanted was nothing less than full American diplomatic recognition of his claim to the Congo.

On November 29, 1883, only two days after his ship arrived in New York, Sanford was received by President Arthur at the White House. To the president and everyone else he met in the capital, Sanford claimed that Leopold's treaties with Congo chiefs were similar to the treaties that the Puritan clergyman Roger Williams, famed for his belief in Indian rights, had made in Rhode Island in the 1600s—and Sanford just happened to have copies of the Williams treaties with him. Furthermore, in his letter to the president, Leopold promised that American citizens would be free to buy land in the Congo and that American goods would be free of customs duties there. In support of these promises, Sanford had brought with him a sample copy of Leopold's treaties with a Congo chief. However, this copy had been altered in Brussels to omit all mention of the trade monopoly the Congo chiefs had ceded to Leopold—

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deceiving not only Arthur but also Sanford, an ardent free trader who wanted the Congo open to American businessmen like himself.

The United States did not, of course, like to think of itself as endorsing colonialism. But, Sanford asked, weren't these "independent States" in Africa under Leopold's altruistic protection really a sort of United States of the Congo? Only a week after Sanford arrived in Washington, President Arthur cheerfully incorporated into his annual message to Congress, only slightly rewritten, some text Sanford had drafted for him about Leopold's high-minded work: "The rich and populous valley of the Kongo is being opened by a society called the International African Association, of which the King of the Belgians is the president. . . . Large tracts of territory have been ceded to the Association by native chiefs, roads have been opened, steamboats have been placed on the river and the nuclei of states established. . . . The objects of the society are philanthropic. It does not aim at permanent political control."

Leopold was delighted to hear his own propaganda tripping off the president's tongue. One of his top aides cabled Sanford: ENCHANTED WITH EMILE.

Sanford then went to work on Congress. He rented a house at 1925 G Street, just a few blocks from the White House; summoned his pretty young wife and his chef from Belgium; and began wining and dining senators, representatives, and cabinet members. It was Sanford's finest hour, for the bon-vivant personality that made him a poor businessman served him wonderfully as a lobbyist. He had an excellent wine cellar, and in one newspaper he was called "the gastronomic diplomat" waging a "gastronomic campaign." Secretary of State Frederick Frelinghuysen was a frequent guest. President Arthur and members of Congress and the cabinet found themselves receiving boxes of Florida oranges.

In winning congressional support for Leopold's claim to the Congo, Sanford discovered an unexpected ally. Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama, a former Confederate brigadier general, was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Like most white southern politicians of the era, Morgan was frightened by the specter of millions of freed slaves and their descendants, filled with threatening dreams of equality. The fierce-looking, mustachioed senator, small in stature but loud in bluster, thundered ominously about the dangers of "enforced negro rule" as blacks were "foisted into . . . white families," in which they might inflict "a worse fate than death upon an innocent woman." Morgan fretted for years over the "problem" of what could be done with the growing black population. His solution—shared by many others—was simple: Send them back to Africa.

To Morgan, Leopold's new state seemed heaven-sent. Wouldn't this territory require manpower to develop? And wouldn't the Congolese be eager to trade with the United States if the Americans they met had the

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same skin color? And couldn't the Congo become a market for the South's cotton surplus? Africa, he once said on the Senate floor, "was prepared for the negro as certainly as the Garden of Eden was prepared for Adam and Eve." (Morgan gave this speech in support of a bill providing federal funds for American blacks who wanted to emigrate abroad. In response, an African-American convention in Chicago passed a resolution demanding federal funds for the emigration of southern whites, Senator Morgan in particular.)

Sanford completely agreed with Morgan. The Congo could serve, he had said, as "an outlet . . . for the enterprise and ambition of our colored people in more congenial fields than politics." Sanford and Morgan hit it off splendidly, and Morgan, too, began receiving crates of Florida oranges.

In early 1884, Morgan introduced a Senate resolution in support of Leopold's Congo claims, first sending a rough draft to Sanford to mark up. Like any good lobbyist, Sanford reached for even more, adding to Morgan's reference to land "drained by the Congo River" the words "its tributaries and adjacent rivers"—language that could be interpreted as including all of central Africa. This was toned down in the resolution that finally passed, but the Senate also issued a thousand copies of a long report on the Congo under Morgan's name, written mostly by Sanford. "It may be safely asserted," the report declared, "that no barbarous people have ever so readily adopted the fostering care of benevolent enterprise as have the tribes of the Congo, and never was there a more honest and practical effort made to . . . secure their welfare."

Sanford also got the New York Chamber of Commerce to endorse U.S. recognition of Leopold's claim. Favorable accounts of the king's philanthropic work suddenly began appearing in major American newspapers, stimulated, in the fashion of the day, by quiet payments from Sanford. On April 22, 1884, Sanford's multilayered campaign achieved its aim. The secretary of state declared that the United States of America recognized King Leopold II's claim to the Congo. It was the first country to do so.

Leopold knew he owed this great coup to Sanford, and he also knew that what mattered even more than money to the general was royal praise. He invited Sanford's wife, who had returned to Belgium, for breakfast. "I cannot begin to tell you," she wrote to her husband afterward, "of all the flattering things the King said about you. . . . My dear *nothing* could have been more flattering to you or tender to me than were both the King and Queen."

Sanford then tried to get himself hired as a top colonial executive in Brussels. His hopes were in vain, however, for King Leopold II knew that Sanford's ability to give elegant Washington dinner parties was not matched by either administrative talent or imperial ruthlessness. Instead,

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Leopold gave Sanford permission to gather ivory and other products in the Congo. But the Sanford Exploring Expedition, as this venture was euphemistically called, soon went the way of Sanford's other businesses. As usual, he tried to manage everything from Belgium, where mounting debts forced to him to sell off part of his art collection and move to a smaller château. Meanwhile, his man in charge in the Congo took to drink, and steamboat boilers rusted on the trailside. Henry Shelton Sanford died, deep in debt, in 1891.

"The recognition of the United States was the birth unto new life" of Leopold's Congo venture, wrote Henry Morton Stanley, and he was right. In the months that followed, all the major countries of Europe followed America's lead, and Leopold found himself the ruler of an African colony larger than England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy combined—and seventy-six times the size of Belgium itself.

The Congo's uniqueness as a colony went beyond its size. It did not belong to a European country; it was Leopold's personal possession, the only large territory on earth claimed entirely by one man. Because Belgium was such a small country, most Belgians felt that a colony would be a money-losing extravagance. This was no problem for Leopold, who was delighted to claim the whole territory himself. In Belgium, he was the constitutional monarch of an increasingly democratic state; in the Congo, he was absolute ruler.

Over the quarter century that followed American recognition of his claim, Leopold proceeded to exploit his colony with an avarice and violence unmatched in the European colonization of Africa. Joseph Conrad gives a searing portrait of this in his *Heart of Darkness,* based on the six months he spent in the Congo in 1890 as a steamboat officer. Very little in the novel is made up; almost everything—including the notorious Mr. Kurtz and his palisade of African skulls—is based on real people and events. By the time Leopold's rule in the Congo and its immediate aftermath were over, the territory had suffered a loss in population estimated today at ten million people: half its inhabitants.

The cause of most of these deaths was a worldwide rubber boom that began in the 1890s, triggered by the invention of the inflatable bicycle tire—an idea quickly adapted to the automobile. The equatorial African rain forest that covers half the Congo was rich in wild rubber vines. Leopold was eager to gather as much wild rubber as possible before other countries could harvest new plantations of rubber trees that were still growing to maturity. He knew that the world rubber price would drop at that point. To squeeze out all the rubber he could while it was still profitable, the "benevolent" and "philanthropic" king essentially turned much of the Congo's adult male population into slave laborers.

The backbone of the system was Leopold's nineteen-thousand-man

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private army. Soldiers would march into a village, take women hostage, and hold them for days or weeks until the men of the village gathered their quota of wild rubber. The women were kept under abysmal conditions and frequently died; the men sometimes broke their legs or backs falling from the trees they climbed to reach the upper sections of vines. Rubber slavery disrupted local agriculture. Many people, weakened by malnutrition, succumbed to disease. Others fled deep into the rain forest and starved to death.

Thanks in large part to eyewitness accounts by British and American missionaries, and to a tireless British journalist named Edmund D. Morel, who publicized their testimony and enriched it with further research of his own, the Congo eventually became a major human rights scandal. In 1903, the British Parliament passed a strong, unanimous resolution of protest, and Leopold began to worry that the same thing might happen in the United States, where "Congo reformers" were increasingly active. A pair of Congo missionaries made a forty-nine-city U.S. tour to speak about the atrocities. At one meeting in Chicago, an old woman who had been born a slave tried to donate her life savings to the Congo cause; the reformers accepted only one dollar. Protest petitions were signed by university presidents, divinity school deans, bishops, newspaper editors, the governor of Massachusetts, and every member of the Massachusetts state senate. A Congo resolution was passed by the convention of the National Women's Christian Temperance Union. Booker T. Washington brought a delegation of black Baptists to the White House to urge President Theodore Roosevelt to put pressure on Leopold. "Dr. Washington is no small enemy to overcome," one of Leopold's agents in the U.S. wrote the king.

Mark Twain, who shared the podium with Washington in several anti-Leopold meetings, went to the nation's capital three times to lobby. "I think I have never known him to be so stirred up on any one question as he was on that of the cruel treatment of the natives in the Congo Free State," Washington wrote of Twain. "He never seemed to tire of talking on the subject." Twain had lunch with Roosevelt, met with Secretary of State Elihu Root, and in 1905 wrote a pamphlet, *King Leopold's Soliloquy,* an imaginary monologue, bitterly critical of Leopold, that went through many reprintings.

Already there were mutterings in Belgium against Leopold's one-man rule in Africa. Further protests, especially in the increasingly powerful United States, threatened his hold on his lucrative colony. The only way to put out this firestorm of criticism was to mount another American lobbying campaign. The king leapt into action. He gave Congo land and mining concessions to major American businessmen, including Bernard Baruch, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and the Guggenheims. And, with his eye on a key U.S. voting bloc, he played the role of religious victim. His representatives in Rome successfully convinced the Vatican that this

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Catholic king was being set upon by unscrupulous Protestant missionaries. A stream of messages in Latin flowed from the Holy See across the Atlantic to the designated Catholic point man for Leopold in the United States, James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. Gibbons believed that the Congo reform crusade was the work of "only a handful of discontented men . . . depending largely upon the untrustworthy hearsay evidence of natives," and spoke out loudly on Leopold's behalf. The king awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown.

Leopold also deployed a squadron of additional lobbyists. Professor Alfred Nerincx of George Washington University helped publish a new English-language magazine on the Congo, gave speeches, and organized the placement of favorable articles in highbrow magazines. Frederick Starr, an oddball University of Chicago anthropologist who believed strongly in the inferiority of "primitive" peoples, received one of Leopold's innumerable medals and a full year's all-expense-paid VIP tour of the Congo. In return, he produced a series of fifteen enthusiastic articles in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* under the heading "Truth about the Congo Free State." Henry Wellington Wack, an attorney for a patent-medicine firm, published a thick book that soon appeared in thousands of American libraries. Instructions from Brussels were that Wack was "to act as if he were not in the State's employ, but merely an impartial publicist."

However, another American agent proved less reliable, for in setting up his new U.S. lobbying effort, the king had made a rare and disastrous misstep.

If O. J. Simpson had been on trial in 1904, the man hired to head his defense team might have been Colonel Henry I. Kowalsky of San Francisco. Kowalsky was a classic American type: the flamboyant trial lawyer who skirts the edge of the law himself and whose showman's dazzle attracts a roster of famous friends. Among his clients were boxers and underworld figures, and he had a knack for finding previously unknown relatives or common-law wives of wealthy people whenever there was a will to be contested. Like General Sanford, "Colonel" Kowalsky had an unearned title—in fact, he had never served in the army, though he liked to let Europeans believe he had.

It was not just Kowalsky's personality that was larger than life. A renowned amateur chef, he consumed a vast amount of his own and others' cooking. "Compared with him," a reporter later observed when the portly William Howard Taft was in the White House, "President Taft is a top worker in a team of acrobats." Kowalsky's enormous neck cascaded over his collar; his voice had a husky wheeze; and when a San Francisco newspaper asked local luminaries for their favorite recipes one Christmas, Kowalsky slyly submitted one for roast jowls.

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Kowalsky also suffered from narcolepsy, the disease that causes uncontrollable short spells of sleep. However, he may have had more control over this problem than he admitted, for, as a courtroom journalist covering one trial noticed, "he awakes just in time to interpose the most pertinent legal objections to questions."

"And it is these sudden awakenings," the story went on, "that have occasioned such havoc among the furniture of Judge Graham's court. When a man of some 300 pounds—to put it conservatively—awakes with a start, it is apt to jar the strongest chair made. . . . A few times more and there is an ominous creak, and then a crack and a smash. 'There goes another,' murmurs Bailiff McGenity." At the end of this particular trial, Kowalsky grandly presented the court with a special chair he had ordered built—of solid oak, held together by iron bolts, its legs reinforced with iron bracing.

When Kowalsky was once on the opposite side of a bitter legal battle with the famous gunfighter Wyatt Earp, the short-fused Earp threatened to shoot Kowalsky on sight. When the two men ran into each other in a San Francisco saloon, Earp forced Kowalsky into a back room, pulled out a revolver, and told the lawyer to get ready to meet his maker. Kowalsky's jowls dropped onto his chest and he dozed off. Earp stormed from the room, saying, "What can you do with a man who goes to sleep just when you're going to kill him?"

Kowalsky had an unerring eye for the pathway to a lucrative client, and he spotted one when Prince Albert, heir apparent to the Belgian throne, came to California. Albert was traveling incognito, but Kowalsky recognized and befriended him, and was rewarded with an invitation to Belgium in 1904. There he was received on board the royal yacht at Ostend and introduced to the king. Kowalsky portrayed himself to Leopold as a lobbyist extraordinaire, just the man who could help counteract the effect of those troublesome do-gooders who were regrettably causing so many problems for His Majesty. With the reformers starting to stir up the American public, there was no time to waste. Leopold hired Kowalsky.

When Kowalsky returned to California and prepared to move East, his friends in San Francisco gave him a farewell banquet that doubtless added a few more pounds to his already awesome frame. "I shall not closely follow the text of the toast which has been assigned me," said the mayor of San Francisco. "Like our guest, it is too large a subject." Another speaker commented that it was fortunate Leopold had not sent Kowalsky to the Congo itself, where "the cannibals of Africa would have taken pleasure in so choice a morsel."

Kowalsky replied to the toasts, "When I leave you, it is only because I have heard the clarion call of duty in the interest of humanity and civilization." The clarion call included an annual retainer of 100,000

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francs—about $500,000 in today's currency. Kowalsky went to see President Theodore Roosevelt and gave him a silver-framed photograph of Leopold, an album of photographs of the Congo, and a memorandum asking him not to be deceived by jealous missionaries and British merchants.

Among those taken by surprise by all this was Baron Ludovic Moncheur, the Belgian minister to the United States, who had just penned a rapturous article titled "Conditions in the Congo Free State" for the influential *North American Review,* and was under the impression that *he* was leading Leopold's American lobbying effort. He was horrified by the sudden appearance of Kowalsky, who had the unmistakable look of a shyster. On the day of his farewell banquet in San Francisco, Moncheur learned with dismay, Kowalsky had gotten into a fistfight in court with a creditor. Moncheur and his aides sent off a frantic stream of messages to Brussels.

Finally Moncheur received a coded telegram from a top executive for Congo affairs: "I've gotten your information on Kowalsky. Do you think the situation is such that we should cancel his mission?—which would be difficult for us, however. Wouldn't it be better to try to give him another mission in Africa or China?"

"It would be worse than useless to send him to the Congo," one of Moncheur's aides replied to Brussels, "unless one could hope that he wouldn't come back." Moncheur followed this up with a prescient warning about Kowalsky: "If he took me to be the cause of his disgrace, he could make scenes which would produce a scandal in the press."

Gingerly, Congo state officials asked Kowalsky to come to Brussels, where they requested that he undertake an urgent mission to Nigeria. Kowalsky was interested enough to buy himself a pith helmet and an elephant gun, but he finally decided to turn down the assignment, probably guessing that he was being put out of circulation. Because he knew too much, Leopold's worried Congo aides did not dare fire him. Instead, they sent him back to the United States with more Congo lobbying instructions. These barely disguised their mounting anxiety: "[Mr.] Kowalsky's mission is to enlighten Senators and Congressmen as to the justice of our cause, and to ward off the passing of unfavorable resolutions by them." However: "He will be careful not to call at the White House except in case of absolute necessity. . . . He will make no public speeches except after taking the Belgian Minister's advice."

A year after hiring Kowalsky, the king let his contract expire. In vain the lawyer bombarded Leopold with letters (all beginning "My dear Majesty") denouncing his rivals among Leopold's other American lobbyists (he called one "a characterless, unworthy and unprincipled ingrate"), and making extravagant claims for himself ("It was a mighty task, and I worked night and day. . . . I have travelled thousands of miles in this

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cause"). He tried to flatter the king into putting him back on the payroll: "I confess having conceived an affection for your Majesty such as I felt for my much beloved and lamented father." On top of his annual retainer, Leopold paid Kowalsky a hefty 125,000 francs extra to leave quietly, all the while soothing him with hints that at some future date his valuable services might again be needed.

At last, however, the spurned Kowalsky did exactly what Moncheur had dreaded. On December 10, 1906, readers of William Randolph Hearst's *New York American* picked up their newspapers to find a front-page exposé on the workings of the American Congo lobby. KING LEOPOLD'S AMAZING ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE OUR CONGRESS EXPOSED. . . . FULL TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN KING LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM AND HIS PAID AGENTS IN WASHINGTON. Although Kowalsky indignantly maintained that someone had robbed his office, he had apparently sold Hearst his complete Congo correspondence.

Every day for a week, Hearst played the story for all it was worth, splashing tens of thousands of words and dozens of photographs across the pages of his newspapers. It could not have been a worse catastrophe for Leopold, for, to dramatize its scoop and the king's villainy, the *American* printed the Congo reformers' photographs and atrocity charges. INFAMOUS CRUELTIES. . . . TORTURE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN. . . . U.S. AMAZED AT CRIMES OF CONGO. A large cartoon showed Leopold chopping off black children's hands on a butcher's block.

It was revealed that besides his hefty salary and keep-quiet payments, Leopold had promised Kowalsky an additional 100,000 francs worth of bonds "if the American Government does not make any declaration harmful to the Congo State, and if Congress passes no unfavourable resolutions before the end of the next session." A letter from Kowalsky to the king boasted of a $1,000 bribe he had paid to an unnamed prominent journalist, who was, he claimed, "the President's personal friend," and from whose services "we got hundreds of thousands in advertising our cause." Kowalsky also boasted that he had quashed an exposé in *Munsey's* magazine by going to "the editor, my personal friend, who destroyed the article and published one very complimentary to Your Majesty's interest instead."

The most enticing revelation of all was that in order to derail Congo protest resolutions, Kowalsky had used Leopold's money to bribe Thomas G. Garrett, a staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Garrett, Kowalsky extravagantly wrote the king, had "stood at the door of the committee room and held back the demanding, howling missionaries, ministers and religious cranks. . . . All this time I was at my post, and only when Congress closed did I breathe safely." On the *American*'s front page appeared a handwritten letter on U.S. Senate stationery from Garrett to Kowalsky, demanding part of the promised payment.

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Garrett was promptly fired. Hours after the story broke, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts introduced a resolution calling for an international investigation of the Congo scandal. Skillful lobbying by Moncheur got the resolution watered down before it passed, but the entire episode drastically changed the climate in Washington. Secretary of State Elihu Root reversed the government's previous hands-off policy and decided to cooperate with the British to push Leopold to end his rule over the territory. International pressure rapidly mounted.

Just as King Leopold's one-man rule over his huge African colony had been consolidated by a successful Washington lobbying campaign, so it was undone, in part, by the fallout from an unsuccessful one. The Kowalsky debacle was a turning point. Only weeks later, Leopold was forced to begin a long series of negotiations with the Belgian government over the terms on which the Congo would pass from his ownership to that of Belgium, and in 1908 the deal was done. He died, bereft of his prize possession, the following year. Sadly, however, the change in the Congo's status did not end the miseries of its inhabitants. The near-genocidal level of deaths continued for more than a decade, and forced labor for much longer. The heritage of slavery never vanishes easily. Harsh regimes based on ruthless exploitation—first by Belgian colonial administrators, then by dictator Mobutu Sese Seko—followed that of Leopold. Through this bitter legacy, the effects of the king's long, brutal, one-man rule still linger in that devastated country today.

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All That Did Not Fall

DOUG TALLEY

You might consider while planting rhododendron
what it is Eden requires, a space between trees,
a dose of innocence, the stars of heaven close by,
though almost all now are scattering as quickly
as they can. And while you dig your hands into soil,
with all your memories close to your fingertips,
you might remember your father reading a magazine,
his hand on a glass of scotch and water by the lamp,
his eyes a blank stare, not at you but at some space
several feet away, his words as you try to kiss him
goodnight, a fruit of new knowledge to your lips.
"Don't you think," he says, "you're too old for this?
Don't you think it's time to just say goodnight?"
You might give rejection any name you wish, something
fired in your heart like a shot and scattered feathers.

What do you think years later, planting rhododendron,
gardening into your life as much paradise as you dare
manage or imagine? You could think many things.
Perhaps you do. Perhaps you think of all that did not fall.
You think of the sun in its broad halo over the earth.
You think of the wisdom flowers gave to Christ.
You think, Here it is. I have found some semblance
of the beauty that was not lost. When each red blossom
repeats itself, day after day and year after year,
I will think of kisses, how many were never born,
how many still hide their faces, how many still wait
in darkness, to blossom, on the other side of day,
beyond the soft, slow, welcome crash of sunset.

Doug Talley is the vice-president and counsel of an insurance consulting firm and a bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

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Portrait of a Pseudonym

HORTENSE CALISHER

In the morning's mail, the card below:

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT
THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE AUTHORS GUILD
EXTENDS THIS INVITATION TO
Jack Fenno
TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AUTHORS GUILD
AND OF THE AUTHORS LEAGUE OF AMERICA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLICATION OF
The Small Bang (Random)

I see Jack Fenno, my pseudonym, quite clearly. A scion—possibly grandson?—of the Mr. Fenno who in the late 1920s had a publishing house next door to my father's offices at 18 East Seventeenth Street, and now and then sent me small limp-leather books not usual for a child: *Ballad of Reading Gaol,* Wilde's *Fairy Tales.* Jack himself is modest but not self-effacing, and even has a certain dash. He has the slightly weathered,

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Hortense Calisher has written more than twenty books, many of them novels, including *False Entry, The New Yorkers, Journal From Ellipsia, Queenie,* and the recent *In the Slammer with Carol Smith.* In 1992 a novel, *The Small Bang,* was published under the pseudonym Jack Fenno, since another novel, *In the Palace of the Movie King,* was so shortly to follow under her own name. Modern Library has recently published *The Collected Novellas of Hortense Calisher* (1997).

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tea-colored skin of one who has been in far places, or even in hiding—though always in good company. Though we share some British blood, he has refused from the first to be christened a Nigel, a plain John, or a couple of initials rattling like loose change. He knows he is more than an escapade. Nor will he admit to any moral infirmity. But will he answer this invite?

"No-o-o, ducky," he flips me, in the class-conscious twang of the book on whose spine his name appears. "Your responsibility. You answer it."

In the old three-sectioned, back-layered breakfront whose contents, dating from before the Civil War, are my childhood library and basic education, many of the authors have cloaked identities, or rather, as is gradually borne upon me, double ones. The nineteenth century was one of the golden ages of the pseudonym. As a naïve, mostly unguided reader, I never question this. For a writer to lie doggo in some form or another must be the way of the world. Some title pages list a name in quotes, such as "Ouida" or "Raffles." The preface to *Essays of Elia* reveals that Elia is in fact Charles Lamb. Dickens is himself in his novels, but in his "Sketches" he is "Boz." In our paperback Tauchnitz editions, several authors were "from the nobility." I had no idea whether or not the Baroness Orczy, author of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, was a real baroness. By contrast, Sir Walter Scott, a real baronet whom we had to read in school, was as dullish as one might expect.

In retrospect, how comfortable this realm of mild falsity, for a reader who hasn't yet heard of the obligation to discriminate and is merely mad-for-print. As the true names begin to seep to me, there seems to be no clear division between the majestic nom de plume and the worst hack's. Nor between the women and the men, though when a library book discloses to me who the George Eliot of our old calf-bound *Daniel Deronda* (Vol. 1) really was, I guess that she must have done better that way than as a Mary Ann. When George Sand's novels come to seem abominably thin compared to the Victorian tomes that provide me with a week's read, a dip in our encyclopedia gives me the gymnastic reason why. Like those equestriennes who, leaping from saddle to saddle, ride two horses simultaneously, she promoted herself both as a man nobody had to believe in and as the passionate feminist, Aurore.

Historically, the reasons behind the pseudonym have been both brutal and mild, ranging from the political safeguards against being killed for your subversions, to the merely social, when you didn't want the king's court, or your relatives around the corner, to know what you wrote. Or you craved to be a child of the people, though by birth an aristocrat. Or if female, you felt yourself to be less than a Sappho, yet more than a "Miss Reade." More often a nom de plume, as the old phrase indicates, would have been adopted simply because that was the custom.

These days, when you "go your own way" most approvably if you can

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be seen doing it on prime time, it's harder to reconstruct or even credit that frame of mind. What other assumptions, or separations, lay beneath? Was one joining up for "art," or chary of being bounced by the bourgeoisie? Or choosing one's "true" personage as against one's mundane life? Pseudo, after all, means false; it has an edge of masquerade. Is adopting such a name today likely to be the mark of the genre writer—the author of thrillers or sci-fi—as distinguished from the writer who forges his or her own world?

Scrutinize the past and you still have to take it one by one. Did Marie-Henri Beyle become Stendahl because he was also an officer in Napoleon's army and later consul at Civitavecchia? Or because his wit alienated most of his contemporaries except for Balzac, who while covering the widest possible span of society never found it necessary to take another name? Cicily Fairfield became more trenchantly famous as Rebecca West. George Orwell found it easier to be down-and-out in Paris and London than he might have as the Eric Blair he was born. Virginia Woolf, daughter of the overbearing critic Sir Leslie Stephen, will be forever known under her husband's aegis. Jules Verne, which rings like the very prototype of an alias, is not. That a Destouches became a Céline is understandable; his misanthropy included himself. Sartre and Gide instead touted themselves, finding ambiguities enough in the confessional, or in the world at large. The theater's tradition of stage names is also an easy path to the footlight freedom that comes of keeping one's family in the wings. It's possible that Molière's father, the merchant Poquelin, really did speak "prose."

Of all those tricksy signatures my lot grew up with, "Mark Twain" has the deepest derivation. A pseudonym, in those days, could strike a note of intimacy with the populace, suggesting that literature itself, from the rollicky to the serious, was an alter ego everybody could share. In riverboat language, when Sam Clemens was a pilot on the Mississippi, the call "mark twain" meant "two fathoms sounded." Who could hope to do as well? Any alias ought to have a buried meaning, some private thrill of ownership, or tribute. Scholars might well find that most do.

Yet when I break into print I use my own name. At thirty-seven, I am a quondam college rebel, afterwards immured, if instructively, in family, and belated victor of a battle to write at all. To find myself a member in good standing of a profession I have thought myself fitted for, but have been so long barred from, comes like grace descending. I haven't forgotten that pantheon in the bookcase; it merely does not occur to me that I might be taking a place there. What does count is that having lived under my married name, I can now return to my own. For surely one's gifts, such as they are, are "single" and owed to those who bore you? Finally, I

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belong to a century in which it has become ever more important to be known as who you are.

As for being a woman, I have always relished that, envying the men solely for their mobility—which I will shortly assume. Most of the writers then surrounding me are post-Hemingway men who have been to war. So in my way have I—at home. The other literary landscape of the day is Freudian, where I haven't been, either as aficionado or analysand. Slowly I become aware of the great fund of husbandry, housewifery, and family prescience that my immurement has endowed me with. What I may have, not unknown to writers, is the outsider's third eye. That is what I must keep faith with. For all devotees of the imagination, of which I feel myself to be one, honesty is the required root. No one warns me that this might flourish as well—or even better?—in anonymity.

When you start out as a writer there are two rules of thumb nobody any longer suggests. One: Do not reveal who you are. Two: The best place for you is in your books. There you are free to be anybody and anywhere you have the power to describe. Only art, teaching its stern private lessons, will restrict. Your other life—as axe-murderer, housewife, or city clerk, or maybe all three—is yours to pursue. Let the pundits deduce you; after a while they'll stop, uneasy at having to judge an author who has no biography, sex, or age. You in turn give up those helpful claques associated with any human division: color, religion, locale, on the chance that your persona on the page, if individual enough, may still intrigue. Meanwhile, the world, not knowing the cut of your jib or your situation, will have only your pages to study, and as these accumulate, your body of work. Once known as an *oeuvre*—as in "They also oeuvre who only stand and wait." I do not.

Ten years pass. I publish two more books, in each a novella now added to the stories. I have a public life—classes, speeches, readings, political stances. Even in the last I find I cannot join a caucus, but must use the page both to find out what I believe and to declare. Auden's assertion that poetry doesn't make things happen is a tidy conceit for a melancholy afternoon's tea break, but as the prayers smoke from the mosque and the young thousands chant rap, my era will re-examine what is a happening. Nor in that circum-audient air can one deny—terrifying, some of it—the power of prose.

By then I am aware of the gap between being a writer "personality" and hoping that "the page" will speak for itself. *Professional* is a word I begin to mistrust. Readings are supportive: good to meet one's audience, especially in far places. But I begin to see how the claque can influence or even bleed the work. Do I wish to be a writer, or a *diseuse?* I brood on that word, a relic of the mauve decade. For I have learned also that while a man on a podium is seen as speaking to the power of his subject, a woman there cannot always expect that neutrality.

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By then, a first novel is ready. The gap between the short form and the long is one that a writer will often bridge gradually, more naturally than people like to allow. Any sea change, so predictable in a writer's growth, and so likely in the process, worries them, in having changed the image perhaps first dear to them. Ten years "late" I have a book as different from the stories as a long novel must be, and written in the persona of a man. So had some of the short work been, but in the convention of the novel the heroes belong to the men. All my life I would write of the sexes as alternately as I chose to observe them, but this I did not yet know.

Up in Boston, my publishers by report are happily beating their stickpins, saying "This—is—*it.*" I am asked up there to confer. At the sight of that row of kindly, shrewd faces, all my internal disclaimers converge. Behind them is a breakfront. The neat rows of books behind its glass are nothing like our old jumble. Yet on one shelf is that "Oliver Optic" (William Taylor Adams, 1822–1897, juvenile writer)—author of 116 books "of exciting adventure combined with wholesome instruction," as the flyleaf of our one tattered copy promised—who is now wildly signaling to me in semaphore?

"Can I publish *it* under a pseudonym?" I quaver. When they gulp, I add—as seductively, I hope, as an Aurore, but as straightforwardly as a Mary Ann: "I could be one of the Georges."

The answer, from "The Chairman," as he is known (Arthur Thornhill, Sr., doyen of American publishing): "No, I'm afraid not. He wouldn't be known at the bookstore."

I am so charmed by the idea that I am known there that I let it be.

Another quarter of a century passes. The year is 1991. Again, I have just finished a novel in progress for ten years, written "behind" the others that have appeared in the interim. A shorter novel suddenly pops up and completes itself in a few months. This is a rhythm I'm used to. Long, obsessive work, finally over, often engenders a change of pace; the exit from one environment releases me to another. My editor likes the new one. Now he has acquired two books, and a quandary: Which shall come first?

I am mischievously reminded of a great hall once shown me in the British Foreign Office, where three doors of august height could be opened simultaneously, so that no maharajah was given precedence.

"We could publish the two at the same time. I did that once. Turned out okay."

What I've proposed is no doubt a publisher's nightmare—books tumbling toward him, past schedule and budget, from valued but incontinent authors who have never heard of "writer's block." A great editor, however, neither violates a writer's ethic nor imposes his or her own, but

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allows author temperament to take its course. Among the legion with whom Sam Vaughan has dealt are such disparates as Wallace Stegner, William Buckley (who in a *New Yorker* piece once called him a bird-of-paradise)—and me. If avian similes are in order, I would say, rather, Brit style, "He's a downy bird."

"I know you wrote this new book as a novel," he says. "As usual. But we could run it as a mystery, you know. And before the other one."

"Any novel worth its salt is a mystery until its end," I cry. Rearing up on my hind legs, as our family used to say. Cornered, any writer can grow an extra pair. In the depressed period before I wrote, I used to read three "mysteries" or "detective stories" a day. I know this book is not of the genre, as the crime columns would surely say. Though it has a disappeared man. And a murder? Perhaps.

"Trouble is," says Vaughan, not losing a beat, "your name on it would not raise that expectation."

I still wonder whether he knew about that long-ago request; I'm an anecdotal sort. Certainly my subconscious now slides from my mouth like a garter snake. "Publish it under a pseudonym, why don't you then?" At once, scared at what has risen from the depths, I add: "Then at some point the real perpetrator can stand up."

Never joke. They take me up on it.

And I agree, ambivalent, yes—where's honesty, dignity?—but flushed too with the lovely greasy sensations of the masque. Some bloody Sunday, should the reviewers take their natural revenge for being tested, I will be sipping my espresso in sweet incognito. Meanwhile, let's frivol. When I'm asked, "Who'll you be? Give us the name, eh?" I say, "No Nicholas Postlethwaite, you can be sure. Nor Philippa." Though I do stifle a moment's yearning toward Featherstonehaugh—to be pronounced Fanshaw.

I can see Vaughan is disappointed. For this book could well be by a Britisher, set as it is in England, ancient snuggery of the genre and my second country—and narrated in part by a solicitor in whose haunt, London's Middle Temple, I have often stayed. As for the physicists at whom the book is half-aimed, I've known those on both sides of the sea, and the Anglo-Indians in several versions, from the earliest met in the 1950s via the *Guardian*'s onetime correspondent in New Delhi. The language meanwhile came at me jab jab from that underhand boxer, memory, and so steady on that I edited out many locutions, not wanting to breeze on like some infatuated Yank.

But Yank is what I am. Suddenly I see him, that scion of Seventeenth Street, standing poised in the byway of my first literature, that street of small offices, cage-elevators which led to unknown casements, and polychrome smells. "Fenno," I say. I had named a character in a novel Austin

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Fenno once, as token of the old New York he symbolized. Let that be a dropped clue. But this time I'd christen him the Joker, the practitioner of all trades. "Jack."

In the days after, pseudonymity takes me over, like a new outfit one wants to wear every day. I do an interview with Fenno wherein he is asked questions framed to elicit his identity, all answered quite truthfully, if hemi-demi-circularly. Sample:

Q: Why are you operating under a pseudonym?

A: *The Small Bang* is about a world-renowned physicist who is lost in an avalanche while skiing, and the persons concerned with him. It was felt to be in the mystery genre. Whereas my name would not raise that expectation.

Q: And you went along with that?

A: Any novel worth its salt . . . (etc.)

Q: You appear to know physicists well enough to chastise them. It's been suggested that you are one.

A: Oh no, if I were to play God I'd want to be an ordinary person.

Q: You have a dog character, Pi. Has she a model?

A. Pi is all the dogs I've had, put together. Including Stalky, my first.

Q: Named after Kipling, eh. You are British?

A: My paternal grandfather was.

Q: Traveled a lot, have you?

A: (A list of countries I had been to, or hadn't. Neither category included the U.S.)

Q: Where do you live now?

A: In my books.

Q: How is it to be pseudonymous?

A: Bliss. But it won't last.

In the weeks after, Fenno becomes both a project, waiting to be launched, which I haven't sufficiently boned up on, and the projectile that is me. The publisher circulates a list of famous pseudonyms and their true identities, many new to me. My cherished Eleventh Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, now less a compendium of fact than a trove of how perspective mutates or by golly hasn't changed a whit over the aeons, does yield me a list of treatises on the subject, such as *Deutsches Pseudonymen—Lexicon* and *Dizionario di opere anonime e pseudonime di scrittore Italiani*, plus mention of a work-in-progress by the Swedish Academy of Uppsala. Surprisingly: "England was late in the field. The first work actually published was the *Handbook of Fictitious Names* by R. Thomas (Olphar Hamst), 1868." I am charmed by that parenthesis. Did he (or she), swarmed by role-players, dip into the pseudo-pot? Fiddle with that one anagrammatically, Rolph or Lothar for a start. Thomas is in there too. Ralph.

By the time Fenno does publish, I feel an odd distance. I am not he.

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Rather, he is mine. Something less than a psyche, far more than a guard dog. One *owns* a pseudonym: that is the sensation. Yet I do not go to receptions for him; perhaps we are morganatically married. As expected, some reviewers carp (citing the work of tried-and-true authors which the book does not resemble): This is not a mystery. I agree. Some say it's a novel—and even rejoice, guessing at possible identities, Salman Rushdie and Anita Desai among them. I take both sides as complimentary but won't brood on it.

A sharp friend calls me up the minute he reads, saying, "What you been doing lately, honey chile?" and when I splutter, adds: "I knew it; I knew from the first page!"

I counter, "So did I."

Then, finally, the party's over. The word is out. Everybody has been very kind—as one says at obsequies. For Jack Fenno is dead. But I survive. Having learned, even at eighty, a little more about the writing life. And perhaps not only mine. About any of us who opt to declare.

The lesson is strict: All one's life the wish to display may alternate with the wish to hide. Display means that you show your colors to the world in the proud hope that others will "recognize" you, if not gather under your flag. "Hide" means that your psyche reserves the right to prowl in secret—maybe issuing bulletins from time to time.

Sometimes you succumb to the wish to star. But you won't shimmy your butt, your breast, your brain in every arena at any cost—not you. At other times you retreat almost to life-as-anchorite, cracking your house door just enough to show any acolytes your lamp. But that way lies Saint Augustine or Simone Weil: a beauteous path, but not yours. You've no wish to found a church on your own compromises, like Augustine, and unlike Weil, if on the path to salvation, you would rather write than starve.

So doing, you commit yourself to the double life. Thought is the most private of processes, writing a public act. People like you are always hunting the ultimate lair, some igloo or sheepfold, basement or mountaintop, where, once safe there, you can set about opening your heart to utter strangers. Go that route and you can stay in constant touch with audiences you never see. Or go that other route, sweet with vanity as well. Be that funny visionary, the lone author, fresh in from solitary bivouac, on a solid speaking schedule.

A pseudonym is a recognition of that double life.

One day, when I'm back to being myself, my friend Billie Allen buys a copy of the book in The Mysterious Bookshop. The owner asks her if she knows who the author really is. She says, "Yes, she's my friend."

He says, "In that case, would you tell her that I'll order forty or fifty more copies if she'll sign some of them?"

I phone to say I will. He'll leave a message when he has the books.

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When he does, I make an appointment to stop by.

Though the day is a blustery, snowy one, the shop is only a couple of blocks from where I live. I find myself dressing for more than the weather. I roust out gray leather pants, a present once from Germany, which though I admire them I wear infrequently and always as if they don't quite belong to me. Grab my husband's snow jacket, which hangs conveniently by the door. Need a hat. I eye a tweedy brim I bought for myself once at the London hatter where he was buying a cap; the salesman sold the hat reluctantly. Women over here wore those fly fisherman pokes for several seasons, then the craze faded; I forgot I had it. The sturdy lace-up country boots I wear are old ones, though fashion has only recently anointed their city use by dames.

I know the shop's window but have never been inside, the more fool me. It's tiny and hushed, with that unmistakable brownish air which comes from lovingly hoarded print. No grisly artifacts about, but a spiral staircase leads surely to the arcane? One could wish that all one's books could be vended in this devout atmosphere. The owner himself is browsing in the back, allowing me the same privilege. Patrons here must be mad-for-print indeed. And no doubt quite used to those tight moments when a double turns up. I'll sign all fifty of those copies, I'm thinking. What better way to keep a mate alive?

The owner has seen I want attention. As he comes forward, I jerk my hat brim down. On second thought, I raise it again. He'll know my face, he said on the phone, from the book jackets that carry it. As the one he'll sell does not. I'll never have an opportunity better than this one. To declare.

"I'm Jack Fenno," I say.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Authors Guild, thank you for the invitation. And these "regrets."

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CONSTANTINE P. CAVAFY

translated by Theoharis C. Theoharis

They Might Have Bothered

I've hit bottom, nearly homeless and penniless.
This fatal city, Antioch,
ate up all my money,
this fatal city, with its prodigal life.

Still, I'm a young man in perfect health.
I have astonishing command of Greek
(I know everything and more in Aristotle, in Plato,
in the orators, the poets, and in whatever you might cite).
I've some idea of military matters,
and connections in the senior mercenary corps.
I can handle administration.
Last year I spent six months in Alexandria:
I know enough (and this is useful) of the routine—
the maneuvering of Kagergetis, his swindling, and all the rest.

I believe therefore that I am abundantly qualified
to serve this country,
this dear fatherland of mine, Syria.

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However they employ me, I'll strive to be
an asset to the country. That is my intention.
And if they balk me with their regular procedures—
we're on to them, these fine friends: why name them here—
if they balk me, I'm not to blame.

I'll approach Zabinas first,
and if that moron doesn't understand my value,
I'll go to his rival, Grypos.
And if that idiot also doesn't take me on,
I'm off immediately to Hyrkanos.

In any case, one of the three will want me.

And my conscience is clear
in this indifferent choice.
They all damage Syria equally.

But how am I, a ruined man, to blame?
I'm down and out, just trying to patch a life together.
The almighty gods might have bothered
to create a fourth man who was good.
I would have happily attached myself to him.

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To Abide

It was sometime near one at night,
or one-thirty.

In a corner of the wineshop;
behind the wooden screen.
Except for the two of us the shop completely empty.
An oil lamp cast its small light.
In the doorway the wine clerk kept his watch asleep.

No one could have seen us. We, though,
were aroused so much already,
that we were senseless of precautions.

Our clothes opening up halfway—they were sparse,
since July was a month of exquisite heat.

Gratified flesh amidst
half-opened clothes:
flesh uncovered swiftly—whose ideal form
has crossed twenty-six years: and now
comes to abide in this poetry.

Constantine P. Cavafy (1863–1933) is considered by many to have been the premier modern Greek poet. Theoharis C. Theoharis teaches at Harvard and is the editor of the *Boston Book Review*. He is the author of *James Joyce's Ulysses: An Anatomy of the Soul* and *Ibsen's Drama: Right Action and Tragic Joy*, and is finishing a new translation of all Cavafy's poems.

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Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot

ADAM KIRSCH

As early as his first published book of poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations,* T. S. Eliot made a habit of mocking Matthew Arnold. "Cousin Nancy," a humorous poem about the rebellious, cigarette-smoking "Nancy Ellicott," contrasts her "modern" behavior with the staid bookshelves in her family's home: "Upon the glazen shelves kept watch / Matthew and Waldo, guardians of the faith, / The army of unalterable law." Here, Arnold is on the receiving end of a gentle joke; he is an old fogey, and Eliot mocks his books as a teenager today might mock his parents' vinyl albums.

But "Cousin Nancy" was written before Tom Eliot of St. Louis became T. S. Eliot, critical czar. To assume that role, Eliot had to do more than just make fun of Arnold; he had to dethrone him. For Arnold, despite the contumely to which Eliot subjected him, was to the nineteenth century almost precisely what Eliot became to the twentieth: the poet, literary critic, social commentator, and man of letters who sat at the center of the Anglo-Saxon literary universe. In thousands of homes across the English-speaking world, it is now Eliot himself who "keeps watch," his donnish portrait glaring out from the cover of his *Complete Poems and Plays.* Arnold, thanks in no small part to Eliot, is relegated to the back stacks.

Over the last few decades, however, Eliot himself has begun to fall from favor. The publication of Anthony Julius's *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form* was only the latest blow to his reputation. There is a widespread sense that Eliot is deeply, even fatally, flawed as a man and a

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poet; that his achievement, resting as it does on the pillars of "Royalism, Classicism, and Anglo-Catholicism," represents everything a democratic society cannot tolerate. And this critique has been able to gather strength because it is, in some sense, true: at the root of Eliot's poetry there is a morally troubling element. But it is not so simple as "racism" or "elitism," words that today carry as much charge, and as little definite meaning, as "heresy" or "Trotskyism" did in their times.

Where Eliot's deficiency really lies, and how future poets can learn from it, can be seen most effectively by digging up the remains of the man he buried. For when we see Eliot side by side with Arnold, the large areas of similarity—similarities that Eliot himself was anxious to obscure—bring out their crucial differences, in temperament and philosophy. And (so does time heal all wounds) the comparison may well lead us to give preference to Arnold, if not as a poet, then at least as a model for future writers.

So frequently does Eliot disparage Arnold that it is easy to overlook how much he owes him. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* where he discusses Arnold at greatest length, Eliot uses a favorite technique, one he also employs to devastating effect with Milton and Tennyson: he damns with the faintest of praise. Thus he writes, with a tone of sweet reasonableness, "Arnold was not a man of vast or exact scholarship, and he had neither walked in hell nor been rapt to heaven; but what he did know, of books and men, was in its way well-marshalled." That "in its way" has the sound of a knife being twisted.

Later in the book, even this pretense of fairness is dropped, and Eliot lets loose the famous insults that have helped to define Arnold for generations: "In philosophy and theology he was an undergraduate; in religion a Philistine." His poetry is "the best fruit which can issue from the promise shown by the prize-poem." "He had no real serenity, only an impeccable demeanor." In a book full of discussions of past poets and critics, no one else receives so much acid from Eliot's pen.

It may be with some surprise, then, that readers familiar with Arnold turn to the introduction to Eliot's book. When we find Eliot maintaining that "every serious critic of poetry is a serious moralist as well," we may think of the titles of Arnold's most famous books—*Culture and Anarchy, Literature and Dogma.* When Eliot writes that

> it is sometimes thought that criticism flourishes most at times when creative vigor is in deficit . . . [rather,] you may say that the development of criticism is a symptom of the development, or change, of poetry . . .

we may be reminded of Arnold's 1865 essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time":

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> It is the business of the critical power . . . to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society . . . and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature.

Likewise, when Eliot bemoans the modern poet's isolation from society:

> When the poet finds himself in an age in which there is no intellectual aristocracy . . . when the only alternatives seem to be to talk to a coterie or to soliloquise, the difficulties of the poet and the necessity of the critic become greater . . .

we may almost feel that we are reading Arnold:

> For the creation of a masterwork of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment.

In short, Eliot takes over many of the intellectual concerns that were famously Arnold's. Both men complain that they live in an age unsuitable to poetry, that their culture is fragmented. Both look back longingly to a golden age (Arnold to Greece, Eliot to the Christian Middle Ages). Seen from a distance, Eliot looks very much like Arnold's heir.

Why, then, did Eliot seek so eagerly to belittle his predecessor? Freud—along with Harold Bloom, who invented the phrase "anxiety of influence"—would likely answer that he needed to kill a father figure in order to replace him. But there is something more significant than rivalry in Eliot's bitterness. There is, in fact, a profound difference between the two poets; and it can be seen most clearly in their attitudes toward religion.

For, in addition to everything else, Eliot is Arnold's successor as a poet of religious crisis. Arnold's greatest poems deal with the problem of maintaining faith in the modern world. This is the theme of "Dover Beach," of "Empedocles on Etna," and of "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse," in which Arnold, addressing the inhabitants of that monastery, best expresses his religious sentiment:

> For the world cries your faith is now
> But a dead time's exploded dream;
> My melancholy, sciolists vow,
> Is a passed mode, an outworn theme—
> As if the world had ever had
> A faith, or sciolists been sad!

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Ah, if it *be* passed, take away,
At least, the restlessness, the pain;
Be man henceforth no more a prey
To these out-dated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not to fret alone!

But—if you cannot give us ease—
Last of the race of them who grieve
Here leave us to die out with these
Last of the people who believe!

Knowing that religious faith is "dying out," Arnold nevertheless feels its pull. He is caught, as he writes earlier in the poem, "between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born."

In short, Arnold's poetry is one of diagnosis: he recognizes and states his spiritual problem, but he cannot provide a solution to it. Unable to write deeply felt religious poetry, he restricts himself to what he can honestly write about: his doubt, his frustration, his divided spirit. The danger of this, of course, is that it can come to be frustrating to the reader as well. Arnold's scrupulous refusal to be either monk or atheist can seem like moral impotence, his lament like whining.

Indeed, Arnold was the first to level this charge against himself. In his *Poems* of 1853, he refused to reprint "Empedocles on Etna"—a long poem about the Greek philosopher who, tormented by spiritual doubt, ended his life by jumping into a volcano—precisely because the unresolved anguish of Empedocles seemed poetically unacceptable to him. As he wrote in the preface to that volume:

> What are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done.

Everything to be endured, nothing to be done: this could be Arnold's motto. Suppressing "Empedocles" (he later allowed it to be reprinted, ostensibly at Browning's request) was a significant act of self-destruction, since the very quality Arnold objects to in that poem is present in all his poetry, especially the best; and, perhaps inevitably, that quality led to a larger self-destruction. As Nicholas Murray skillfully shows in his recent *Life of Matthew Arnold*, the stringency of Arnold's principles helped to strangle his talent. "His theories and his critical strictures," Murray writes, "coupled to the demands of his public life, were killing off the poet."

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Although he lived to the age of sixty-five, Arnold wrote almost all his major poetry before he was thirty-five.

But it is, in some sense, appropriate that Arnold's writing should trail off into silence. He had made his diagnosis early on; to go on repeating it would be useless and tiresome. And this sense that the natural end of poetry is silence—that communication can only name a problem, not solve it, and that thereafter writing becomes vanity—gives Arnold a peculiarly modern quality. It allies him with other great diagnostic writers such as Chekhov and Hardy, both of whom reiterate a single understanding of life throughout their works.

This, then, is the price to be paid for diagnostic poetry, for scrupulous poetry: the price of repetition and eventual silence. These may seem like consequences that a poet should avoid at all costs. Eliot tried to avoid them, but proved, in the process, that the costs of forcing a "solution" to the problem of faith can be greater than those of leaving the problem unsolved.

It is important to acknowledge that, considered simply as a poet, Eliot is far superior to Arnold. Eliot criticized Arnold's "auditory imagination," his ear for rhythm and phrasing. In these elements, which are the heart of poetry, Arnold was indeed mediocre, while Eliot was perhaps the greatest master since Milton. Thus, there is a danger of presuming that the basic idea—better, perhaps, the moral attitude—that is expressed in Eliot's poetry is also superior. Superior, for the purposes of art, it may even be. But before we come to that judgment, it is important to see what is sacrificed for Eliot's moral attitude.

For if Arnold's poetry is essentially diagnostic, Eliot's strives to be prescriptive. Its basic idea, at least from "Gerontion" onwards, is that modern spiritual doubt is a problem that can be solved, and that Eliot eventually does solve through his own idiosyncratic form of Christianity. The problem as Eliot inherits it is not very different from Arnold's: tormented by a world without God, he must either give up the idea of God or find a way to restore Him. But Arnold remains poised on the brink of this choice, unable to make it; Eliot does choose, and his later poetry is the chronicle of his attempt to force himself to believe.

This is, in a way, an act of moral courage. Arnold attempted to find substitutes for Christianity in a secularized ideal of "culture"—his famous, perhaps now infamous, "sweetness and light"—and in poetry itself. As he writes in "The Study of Poetry": "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." To Eliot, this was a contemptible evasion of the terrible choice. For him, poetry could convey the moral elevation associ-

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ated with religion only if we were to dupe ourselves, since it would be stripped of the dogma, the content, that forms the basis for morality in the first place.

Thus the keynote in Eliot's discussion of Arnold is contempt, the contempt of one who has faced the facts for a coward. "The most generalised form of my own view," he writes, "is simply this: that nothing in this world or the next is a substitute for anything else; and if you find that you must do without something, such as religious faith or philosophic belief, then you must just do without it." But Eliot does not say that he himself does without it. Indeed, he makes the opposite choice, one that, among the serious writers of this century, he is almost alone in making: he attempts to re-establish a belief in God. And this attempt can be understood only in light of what Eliot himself, speaking on quite a different subject, called "rhetoric."

In an early essay, "Rhetoric and Poetic Drama," Eliot coined a definition of rhetoric that deserves to be at least as well known as his famous "objective correlative." Discussing Elizabethan drama, he writes:

> The really fine rhetoric of Shakespeare occurs in situations where a character in the play *sees himself* in a dramatic light. . . . The scene [Mark Antony's funeral oration] in *Julius Caesar* is right because the object of our attention is not the speech of Antony . . . but . . . Antony's intention, his preparation and consciousness of the effect. . . . In plays of realism we often find parts which are never allowed to be consciously dramatic, for fear, perhaps, of their appearing less real. But in actual life, in many of those situations in actual life which we enjoy consciously and keenly, we are at times aware of ourselves in this way, and these moments are of very great usefulness to dramatic verse.

The importance of this passage for understanding Eliot's own poetry cannot be overstated. Rhetoric, defined as a state of mind in which one "sees oneself in a dramatic light," is the motivating spirit behind Eliot's religious poetry. By making the hard choice that Arnold avoided, Eliot is able to cast himself in a dramatic light, that of the searcher after God. The psychic rewards of this role are tremendous: it dramatizes the spiritual struggle that for Arnold was only the cause of sorrow; it demands awe for the spiritual struggle that in Arnold asks only for sympathy. As a believer, Eliot can write rhetorical poetry—prescriptive poetry—and avoid the ditch of diagnosis into which he believes Arnold has fallen.

If we understand Eliot's religion in this light—not as a pose, necessarily, but at least as a role—his harsh treatment of Arnold becomes more comprehensible. The message Eliot clearly wants to convey is that Arnold's refusal to choose belief is possible only because he had a petty soul. Thus he mocks Arnold's most famous critical formulation:

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> It is in [Arnold's] essay on Wordsworth that occurs his famous definition: "Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life." At bottom: that is a great way down; the bottom is the bottom. At the bottom of the abyss is what few ever see, and what those cannot bear to look at for long; and it is not a "criticism of life."

The rhetoric, the braggadocio, in this passage is evident: Eliot has seen the abyss; Arnold has not. The very fact that Eliot has suffered is a mark of his spiritual profundity, while Arnold's temperateness is a sign of spiritual shallowness. Eliot is making a similar point when he refutes Arnold's claim that "it is an advantage to the poet to deal with a beautiful world": "The essential advantage for a poet is not to have a beautiful world with which to deal; it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory." That last phrase has an unmistakable swagger.

But it is crucial for understanding Eliot to recognize that the language he uses here to prove, rather crudely, his spiritual superiority—"the horror and the glory," "cannot bear to look at for long"—is in no real sense different from his language in "The Waste Land" or "The Hollow Men." There, too, he is rhetorical, insisting on the horror of his spiritual crisis in order to attain a certain glamour. Take, for example, a representative passage from "The Hollow Men":

> This is the dead land
> This is cactus land
> Here the stone images
> Are raised, here they receive
> The supplication of a dead man's hand
> Under the twinkle of a fading star.

This has the same vague, portentous thrill as "the horror and the glory." But the extremity and drama of the passage do not seem justified if what the poet is talking about is religious doubt—not even religious despair.

Compare, for example, the spiritual crisis described by Gerard Manley Hopkins, the last major English poet to take clerical orders:

> I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
> Bitter would have me taste; my taste was me;
> Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
> Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
> The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
> As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

Hopkins evokes recognition and compassion, while Eliot evokes excitement and awe. Notice also that Hopkins uses the first person, whereas

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Eliot is omniscient; Hopkins speaks of himself, whereas Eliot makes the landscape a metaphor for his emotions. Far as they both are, on the surface, from Wordsworth, Hopkins manages to be much more "a man speaking to men" than Eliot.

It may be objected that what Eliot felt was in fact more terrifying, more dramatic, than what Hopkins felt, or what Arnold felt, and that it demanded a correspondingly more dramatic expression. Perhaps. But it was nonetheless a highly self-conscious terror, a "rhetorical" terror in Eliot's own sense; and if it was not consciously willed into existence for the sake of poetry, it could only be the product of a sensibility deliberately keyed to such extremes. The progress of Eliot's poetry from "Prufrock" to "The Hollow Men" shows just this process: the sensitive adolescent sheds his humanity and becomes first a cynic, then a fevered nihilist.

The result, then, is that Eliot's poetry is rhetorical, not diagnostic. This may even account, to some extent, for its superiority to Arnold's poetry. But why is it the source of some inferiority in, for lack of a better word, the moral sense? In what way is Arnold, the lesser poet, a more admirable and instructive model for today's poets?

The answer is, simply, that poetry of Eliot's kind demands an egotism in which the more honest Arnold does not indulge. Eliot's religious rhetoric entails stripping the world of other human beings. We do not think of his suffering as a common human experience, one that calls forth pity and recognition, but as a visionary trial, in the face of which we are to be awed. This is simply because it is impossible to view one's own sufferings on Eliot's cosmic scale when one is sensible of the similar sufferings of others. In order to treat his religious crisis rhetorically, Eliot must, to some extent, think of it as unique; and this blots out any recognition of the crises of his fellows.

Thus Eliot could not write, could never have written:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain . . .

simply because such an address (the famous lines from Arnold's "Dover Beach") imagines a partner in the speaker's own situation, and Eliot admits no partners. In fact, it is fair to say that Arnold's poetry, with its compassion and diagnostic honesty, represents a mature response to despair; while Eliot's, with its self-dramatization, isolation, and high rhetoric, represents a classic immature response.

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So if we are searching for some basic moral flaw in Eliot's poetry, it is best identified not as anti-Semitism, racism, or authoritarianism—for all these are only hinted at—but as egotism, which is their parent and source, and of which Eliot's poetry and prose both offer ample evidence. The egotism that casts the poet's spiritual dilemma as unique and incommensurable is closely akin to the attitude that views Jews not as human beings but as parts of an aesthetic problem, complicating the homogeneity of the perfect society. ("Reasons of race and religion combine," Eliot wrote in 1933, "to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable.") In both cases we see a failure to sympathize, to treat others as ends and not as means. Arnold, for all his authoritarian tendencies (and certainly he had them), remembers that the goal of "culture" is a human goal, the improvement of the lives of human beings. Eliot, for whom culture and history are the stage on which the soul struts and frets, has no qualms about moving human beings about as if they were scenery.

Again, the question is not whether Eliot's poetic achievement stands above Arnold's. Fortunately for us, our aesthetic judgment is amoral; it is for that reason that we will always enjoy Dante and Milton on the one hand, and Blake and Shelley on the other, though in varying degrees at different times. But no writer should deliberately set out to follow an example that he or she recognizes as morally deficient, even if we may all be so judged by posterity. As a model—not necessarily of style, technique, or subject matter, but of basic outlook, of moral attitude—Arnold is superior to Eliot.

This need not imply that Arnold's themes must remain our themes. It is very likely that the really vital poetry of the next generation will be not about God at all—the poets who currently treat that theme often descend into banality or obscurity—but about other profound and secular themes: love, marriage, loneliness, aging, death. (Assembling a canon for the next generation would be an interesting experiment. Perhaps it would begin with Catullus, progress through Villon and Donne, and end up with George Meredith and Robert Lowell.) But whatever the subject, Arnold's example should remind us that, limiting as the poetry of diagnosis may be, it is not embarrassing to the conscience of reader or writer—nor will it ever be.

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After Roofing

(Liberties with Jeffers)

ED WEBSTER

This wild swan of a world is no hunter's game.
Truly. So here I am, straddling the peak
of a ten-twelve roof, thinking about that
as I slap on the last of the caps in the rain.

Why hate the poems coming to nothing?
Who wouldn't better their song?
A missed mark? There are worse things—
I'm sopping wet and the chicken-sticks are slick.

Unlucky hunter! So much for better bullets.
One glinting flash is enough; I'm down.
Oh the thunder of things!
The sky cleft with delight!

Ed Webster's poems have appeared in the 1995 edition of *The Best American Poetry* and in such journals as *Colorado Review* and *Western Humanities Review*. He lives and works in Philadelphia.

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Being Mugged

CATHARINE R. STIMPSON

The television weatherman described the day—Saturday, July 19, 1997—as outstanding: warm, breezy, low humidity. I met my old friend Matthew for dinner in Battery Park City in lower Manhattan to celebrate a new job. After dinner, we decided to walk the short stretch to the 11:30 P.M. ferry for my trip home to Staten Island. Across from the neoclassical bulk of the Old Custom House, we turned south on State Street. Matthew was on my left. In my right hand I carried a black leather tote bag that contained books, my dress shoes, my purse. We were a block from the ferry, at ease with each other, at ease in our city.

Matthew says that out of the corner of his eye he glimpsed someone running and thought "a jogger," as casually as he might have thought "a taxi," "a bicycle," "a tree." I felt my shoulder being shoved and my bag being pulled from my right hand. I held on and found myself being dragged, arm extended, until the bag was ripped away and I fell to the sidewalk.

From my skewed position on the pavement, I saw a young man running down State Street with my bag in his right hand. Matthew was at his heels, shouting "You bastard!"

My left hand scuttled over the concrete until it found my glasses. They were unbroken. I tried to rise, but my right arm would not help. Then Matthew was back to get me on my feet. My right shoulder felt puffed up and alien. Each of my stockings had a perfectly round hole in the center

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of the knee. Within these circles, the skin was bleeding. I thought: My keys are gone. I cannot enter my own home. The bastard mugged me.

A purist might say that I was not really *mugged.* A real mugger would have approached me from behind, wrapped a forearm around my neck. My mugger's chosen MO was the hit-and-run. He had as little to do with my body as possible. He did not stop and smell the skin and hair on the back of my neck. He wanted only to smell my money.

In a matter of seconds, I had been transformed from an upright, independent woman into someone who had to be led: to a private security guard chattering on a pay phone in front of the Old Custom House; to a second guard, posted in the side lobby of a modern office building a few yards to the east. Here I sat on a folding metal chair. The second guard telephoned the police. While Matthew rummaged through the garbage cans in Battery Park (all too appropriately named) to see if the mugger had discarded my bag, the guard placed a call to Liz, my friend, 103 miles away on Long Island, so I could ask her to drive through the night to meet me. Matthew returned to report that the park was full of whispering lovers, but no black tote bag.

After these appeals to public authority and private affection, Matthew and I submitted to the rapid response system New York has designed for minor civilian disasters. Two handsome police officers from the First Precinct arrived, members of a force that had dealt with 49,000 robberies during the previous year. Professional and well pressed, they had the good manners not to reveal how commonplace, how positively low-rent, my mugging must have seemed.

We gave our names, addresses, phone numbers. As clearly as we could, we described the incident; my losses, including $100 in cash; and the mugger: five feet ten or eleven inches, slim, nineteen or twenty years old, short dark hair, brown complexion, dark pants, light T-shirt. We had seen him only from the back, a quarter-profile at best. Fleet and shrewd, he had deposited too faceless an image for us to identify him, in flesh or mug shot.

A squat white ambulance pulled up. Compared with the police, the Emergency Medical Service men were rumpled hayseeds, but the metallic interior of their ambulance was antiseptic and orderly. They took my blood pressure, examined my shoulder, made a preliminary diagnosis that nothing good had happened. Once again, I provided name, address, telephone number, description of the mugging. "Gray-haired lady," one EMT commented to the other. "Real target of opportunity."

When Matthew and I arrived at the emergency room, we were surprised to find that no urban hell awaited: no triage station, no stained plastic chairs, no long queues of the sick and damaged. Deep in downtown, far from the most raucous and rancorous nocturnal streets, we had entered a tranquil sanctuary for Wall Street bankers who suffer cardiac

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arrests on the job. An attendant told Matthew there had been only one gunshot wound that evening. I was ushered to a cubicle with a bed and curtain of my own. The nurse removed my silk suit jacket and then administered two shots—one for tetanus, one for pain. The doctor, a jaunty young man with cowboy boots and a blond ponytail, glanced at the X rays on a computer screen, and told me briskly that I had broken my upper right arm, the humerus, in two places. One was a linear nondisplaced humeral neck fracture, a crack; the second was a Hill-Sachs fracture, a chip. Like an old plate, I thought: cracked and chipped.

The doctor maneuvered the arm—it felt so unfamiliar that I thought of it at this point as "the" arm rather than "my" arm—into a baby blue cotton sling, wrote out a prescription for Tylenol with codeine, printed out a medical report, instructed me to ice the shoulder, recommended that I see my own orthopedic surgeon as soon as possible. It seemed useless to mention the difficulties of doing so on Sunday. He also made two woefully false statements. The pain, he said, would be bad for three days, plateau, and then go away. And having learned I was right-handed, he imitated a person at a keyboard and told me I would be writing within a week. Then the nurse reinserted my good arm into my jacket's left sleeve and draped the right side over the sling. When I left the hospital, I had, of course, nothing to carry but my paperwork.

By the time the sun rose, I was safe at home on Staten Island—and tearfully thankful to be there. Despite my exhaustion, despite the Tylenol, despite the buttressing of pillows and the cool touch of an ice bag, I could sleep for only a few minutes at a time. Hammering me into wakefulness was not only the unyielding physical discomfort but also my compulsive mental accounting of what had to be done next. Hunting down an orthopedist was only the beginning of the management list. I feared that if I did not act percussively, my control over my life would prove even more fragile than the thin cloth of the sling in which my right forearm and elbow were so precariously supported.

The compulsive manager was supplemented by another persona, the perfect lady. Throughout the night, I had behaved as nicely—yes, as nicely—as I could. I had been gracious and grateful with the police, in the ambulance, in the emergency room. I had talked with interest to my nurse about the two children whom her night duty was supporting. I had been a veritable hostess in the drawing room of my own mugging.

This manner had not been ludicrously fake. I believe in politeness. Matthew's benevolent protection had buoyed up my better nature. However, I had also calculated that if I were a wonderfully nice person, people would be more disposed to help me than if I were a crybaby or a shrew. Less consciously, my perfect manners were another way to reclaim control of my mugged life—in fact, to take the term "mugging," with its crude, brassy ring, and make it marginally less brutish.

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Aftermath: the word, born in an agricultural society, once meant the second mowing of a season and the crop of new grass that sprang up afterwards. The aftermath of my mugging—its thorny physical, emotional, and financial crop—has been the antithesis of fresh and pastoral. Every assault victim viscerally learns that the successful criminal dominates the scene. Being a victim means being in someone's power. Job done, the criminal moves on, leaving the victim at last in charge—of an unwanted, unplanned regimen of recovery.

Complicating the management of my regimen was the volatility of my life. In July 1997, I was commuting to Chicago once a week from my New York home to serve as director of the Fellows Program of the MacArthur Foundation. In the fall, I was to pack up my Chicago life, begin my new job at New York University, and move to an apartment in Manhattan. The Staten Island house was on the market. Even before I lost my wallet and my keys and my checkbook, the locations of my computer, Rolodex, pots, pans, and family photographs were already in play.

Now my body had to stay in place. After I visited an orthopedist we tracked down on the Monday after the mugging, Liz drove me to a house on a rush-filled pond on the North Fork of Long Island. As a young woman, Liz had worked in a bush hospital in Australia; now, for the remainder of the summer, she nursed me through a hard convalescence.

Unless human caregivers are negligent or cruel, unless a trauma is too severe, the body follows preprogrammed instructions to heal. The humerus, the shaft of bone connecting shoulder to elbow, revs up to glue the edges of a crack together, to shrug off the loss of a bone chip the size of a young pea. As an anatomist told me cheerfully, "The body handles lots of gunk floating around in it."

Slowly, slowly, swollen flesh shrinks. Throbs dwindle to twinges. Two weeks after the mugging, I stopped walking the floor at night, whimpering like a cat locked outside in the rain. A friend dispatched a bouquet of purple and yellow flowers surrounded by greenery—the precise shades of my tricolored bruises. Although I still have a permanent purplish smear on my forearm, the fading of the flowers did anticipate the eventual fading of most of the bruises.

The orthopedist stabilized my arm by trussing me for five weeks in a device called—with blunt literalism—a shoulder immobilizer. This was a white canvas-and-Velcro corset, enlivened with a few lime green straps, that circled my torso. A piece of material cuffed my upper right arm to the side. My elbow was bent upward at a ninety-degree angle. A second piece of material cuffed my forearm to the canvas over my right breast. My right hand, cocked downward, slipped into a small pouch over my left breast. The immobilizer resembled an Amazonian tube top gone awry, a Jean Paul Gaultier bustier for sadomasochists with medically tinged fantasies.

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After a while I could unbind my right hand and forearm for short periods, let them hang loose, use the hand. From the beginning, I also flexed my right fist obsessively. Still, for more than two months, I mostly lost my right arm and hand. My left arm and hand had to take over, like inexperienced bench players called unexpectedly into a big game. They performed gallantly but incompetently. Habit is a great deadener of consciousness. As the healthy body performs, the mind lapses into stupefaction and forgets how swift, efficient, and smooth this performance is. Then illness or injury throws habit for a loss. So deprived, the mind must refocus in order to make elaborate plans for routines that were once automatic: writing a check, opening a wallet, unlocking a door, hanging up a shirt, making a phone call, eating a meal, taking a bath, uncapping a toothpaste tube.

I invented two rules. First, I was to behave as ordinarily as possible. If I had made tea in the morning, I was to continue to make tea in the morning. In my role as manager, I named this the "Normalization Strategy." Next, no one was to help me unless I explicitly said I needed help. Only if I discovered that I could not section a grapefruit or tie my sneaker laces or stand up alone could Liz or anyone else aid me. This the manager called the "Strategy of Dealing with Others."

An irony of modern medicine is how often we must cure the consequences of a cure. Immobilization helped my bone to mend; however, it also froze the shoulder and elbow joints as if they were metal gearboxes in subzero weather. The ten muscles that connect through the shoulder were reduced to the consistency of crumply tinfoil. Months of physical therapy were necessary to unfreeze the joints, stretch connective tissues and muscles, pump up the muscles. "Two breaks near the shoulder," one physical therapist said ruefully as she dragged a reluctant arm back to the end point, as far as it would go. "Worst possible place. A bone break is just like real estate. All that matters is location, location, location."

Despite its preprogramming, my body often resisted mobilization. Having been hurt once, the muscles guarded themselves against the second pain exacted by the treatment. Whimpers spurted out on the therapist's mat. Week by week, however, I could see what was being accomplished. Children measure their physical progress by what they can do for the first time. I measured mine by what the labor of rehabilitation enabled me to do again. Could I once more lift my right arm and put a plate away on a shelf with a semblance of ease? Could I once more vigorously scrub a bathtub with a sponge in my right hand?

Thus, nature organizes itself, and we follow nature's organizational patterns, to restore the body normal. The mind—wilder, more unpredictable—flinches, flares, improvises. Ah, I fantasized, I would videotape my Body Abnormal as a contribution to American culture. Got a temporary lemon of a body? Squeeze out the permanent lemonade of art.

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Fantasy, however, could take me only so far. I also had to add up and meet the costs of being mugged. Crime pays only for the criminal and, if one is an assault victim, for florists, greeting card manufacturers, health care workers. Three weeks after the mugging, the bills began to arrive: $350.00 for the ambulance (the envelope was addressed to "Charine Simpson"), $466.26 for the emergency room, $240.00 for the doctor with the ponytail, $85.00 for a radiologist I have no memory of meeting. The bills hit not only me but also my family, friends, employer, insurer, and city. Together, we sustained the aboveground economy of crime. The money my mugging has already cost could have supported my mugger comfortably in a day job. And my crime has been "only" a mugging, not a rape, not a gunshot wound. "Only" a right arm has been broken, not a spine, not a skull.

The costs of crime include time and energy as well as money. The police must file a report and assign the crime a complaint number. I must phone the precinct house for this number. Locks on my house and car doors must be changed. Replacements must be obtained for all the rectangles of paper and plastic that contemporary personhood requires—credit cards, bank card, driver's license, health insurance card. Editors must extend my deadlines. Travel agents must cancel reservations and persuade airlines not to charge fifty dollars for every rewritten ticket. My Chicago office must overhaul its routines to accommodate an absent manager. Liz must reorder her life in order to care for me, shop, cook, do the laundry and dishes, wash my hair, drive me to the doctor, get my prescriptions filled, remove the childproof caps from vials of painkillers.

The highest costs of the mugging, of course, were psychic. I have not yet measured their duration, but some are as plain as the scars on my knees. I have been, no matter how briefly, a dependent—dependent upon the devotion of Liz, upon the skill of my doctors and therapists, upon the goodwill of my employers. Accustomed to my role as an imperious adult, I had to reinvent the lapsed negotiating tools I had once deployed as a child surrounded by more powerful grown-ups. As my immobilized shoulder and arm muscles atrophied (at a rate of 3 percent of their mass per day), so did my capacity for independent action. It too required stabilization.

My world seemed less susceptible to my dash and powers. When I was away from home, space seemed dodgier, more dangerous. On a street or public stairway, if I felt someone close to my back, I pulled away, looked around, and then got self-critically vigilant about my hypervigilance. In a supermarket, I feared that people and metal carts would painfully bump into me. There is nothing to fear but fear itself. In the destructive element immerse yourself. So counseled by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Conrad, I entered the IGA in order to do battle against being tremulous. Although my friends accuse me of irony when I say this, the

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public figure for whom my respect has most shot up is Bob Dole, a warrior with acid humor, no self-pity, and a maimed right arm.

Healing and rehabilitation have mostly reestablished me in the eyes of the healthy as a woman with two arms that can circle and swing, two hands that can write and lift utensils. But as a temporary resident in the land of the disabled, I learned permanent lessons about how erratically "normal" people treat the "abnormal." Many are kind, but some are careless, indifferent, hasty, bad-tempered, or cruel. I became accustomed to seeing passersby avert their gaze from me, as if they wished me to be invisible. Given the way my shirts draped over the shoulder immobilizer, perhaps I was taken for an amputee. The phrase "rude health" has its literal truth. The healthy may find the disabled ugly and demanding, an upsetting reminder that no one's good health is cast in marble.

After Liz got me settled at home on the night of the mugging, she had hung up the faux designer suit I had been wearing. It remained in the closet while I was convalescing on Long Island, while I was tying up loose ends in Chicago, after I was back in New York. I did not notice the suit until three months after the mugging, although it is much too vivid for a normal eye to miss. The skirt is black, but the jacket is yellow with black borders and bands of red, blue, black, and green. By coincidence, the yellow is almost identical to the color of my Theraband, a five-and-a-half-inch-wide strip of rubber that my hands stretch at least twenty times a day in order to build up strength.

At first glance, the suit seemed surprisingly unmarked, but rips, pavement grime, and dark streaks of dried blood on the right sleeve soon became apparent. At the dry cleaner, the young woman at the counter took one look and shouted, "*Stain!*"

The owner bustled into view and inspected the garment. "Silk," he said. "Hard to repair. Can't do miracles."

He did not do miracles, but if I ignore one or two marks and some lines of stitching, the suit is now wearable. My right arm glides into its sleeve without outside help, and without causing me to wince. On good days, that is. Flesh and bone. Often hard to repair. Can't do miracles.

Can't do miracles, either, with the way I feel about my mugger, and don't want to. "My mugger": I do not enjoy putting those two words together, but I can't avoid the fact that I have a relationship with the witting cause of all these troubles. The harm of an assault, unlike that of an accident, is willful. One person has decided to hurt another. My mugger has had the opportunity to become acquainted with me. If he has strip-mined my purse with any care, he knows my name, address, telephone number, age, social security number, bank account number, credit cards, employer, museum and library memberships, and the thoughts I jot in my notebook. Having stolen bits of my identity, he has acquired the ability simultaneously to loot me and become me.

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For me, however, the malicious other is a stranger. Except for the look of his back on a summer night, I know only two facts about him: one, he hurt me; two, he was responsible for a new facet of my identity, that of an official crime victim, an OCV. A telephone clerk at the Department of Motor Vehicles inadvertently informed me of this status when I called to report the theft of my New York State driver's license. "You're an official crime victim," she said sweetly. "You won't have to pay for a replacement license. Just go in with your complaint number."

Involuntarily, an OCV joins a far-flung club. My mugger served as both nominator and elector. Many of its members have suffered far more than I, but we share an experience of pain without pleasure, powerlessness without certain redress, and cost without benefit. Being an OCV has had few, if any, positive consequences. My bank would surely have issued a replacement as quickly to a careless vacationer who had dropped his MasterCard into a vat of margaritas. And as it turned out, I ended up paying for my new license after all, since the clerk on duty when I showed up at the Department of Motor Vehicles demanded not only the complaint number but a copy of the police report, which I was not in the habit of carrying around in my newly purchased purse. However, the OCV title did provide the psychological comfort of any accurate name: It solidified the nature and reality of my experience.

I doubt if I weigh heavily on my mugger's conscience. I refuse to romanticize him as a young father desperate to pay for his baby's milk. On the contrary, I surmise that he wanted drugs, clothes, or walking-around money, and that he would laugh, sneer, or shrug if told about the nights when codeine was nearly as impotent against my pain as my body was against his attack. Although he may occasionally regale his friends with the story of his excellent and profitable adventure, I have probably slipped through his memory as fast as my cash slipped through his fingers.

In return, my mugger weighs not at all on my conscience. As an OCV, I am responsible neither for his individual decision to mug me nor, in a more general way, for being mugged. It took me a while to believe that. Early on, a friend instructed me that the incident would never have happened if I had been wearing a fanny pack instead of lugging a tote bag. Her lecture sent me into a flurry of "what if's": What if I *had* worn a fanny pack? What if Matthew and I had taken a taxi to the ferry? What if I had immediately let my tote bag go?

But then my sense of the ridiculous started spinning out a self-conscious parody of these questions: What if I had placated my hair with silver-effacing Clairol as well as shampoo? What if I had chosen to reject New York, become a hermit, and settle in a desert burrow? What if I had been Xena, warrior princess? Usually, I enjoy inventing "what if" scenarios—an exercise essential to game theory, fiction, education, and synaptic stimulation. But my parodies rejected any belief in the usefulness of

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replaying the night of July 19, 1997. For OCVs like me, who were behaving sensibly just before a crime washed over them, "what if" scenarios are traps. They seem initially to plot a way of behaving even more sensibly in the future, but all they actually incite is self-recrimination.

Unlike my conscience, my memory of being mugged is heavy: the rough push on my shoulder, the sudden movement of the bag's leather handles against my palm and fingers, the gagging awareness of harm after I fell. Because of the aftermath, which includes such memories, my mugger inevitably matters more to me than I to him. Through him I have relearned canonical wisdom. Stark as a rock, it instructs me that civilization is a veneer over greed, violence, and chaos. For Matthew and I were enjoying a civilized evening: dinner, companionable feelings, conversation, a walk on a fine summer night. One young brute tore the evening apart, as easily as a knife might slash a Matisse canvas.

A civilization shows its mettle through its ability to redo the ripped veneer. New York City's bureaucracy of repair worked hard for me. The police arrived promptly, treated me courteously. Well after the mugging, the detective assigned to my case continued to call. The ambulance was clean, the technicians were efficient, the emergency room was humane. I had, however, paid in advance for these services. My taxes had supported the machinery of law enforcement, my health insurance premiums the machinery of medicine. What I never could have bought were the voluntary decencies of friends and strangers. The security guard did not have to phone Liz in the country so that I could summon her care. Matthew did not have to protect me so sweetly and consistently during the night of the mugging, or show such concern in the weeks that followed. An immigrant who found some scraps from my purse near the South Street Seaport—membership cards from Staten Island's Snug Harbor Cultural Center and the Metropolitan Museum, identification as a Waldbaum Valued Shopper—did not have to track me down in order to return them.

How civilized is a society? Inspect its laws, monuments, sciences, and arts, but look, too, at the habits of its heart, the extent of its small, freely given acts of compassion. By this test, my society is civilized enough, but like that of the heart muscle, the work of civilization is unceasing.

The counsel of realism advises me that my mugger will get off scot-free. The counsel of my imagination, however, permits me to play "what if" games with his future. In one fantasy he evades the law but not punishment. In my purse was a newly filled prescription for estrogen pills. What if he hated gender-bending but liked drugs? What if he thought my little pink and yellow tabs were a great new way of getting high? What if he gobbled them down and then found his voice rising, breasts enlarging, genitalia shrinking?

I have, however, no bloodthirsty fantasies about what I would do if he

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were in my newly empowered hands. I read at too impressionable an age Sir Francis Bacon's warning that revenge is a dangerous form of wild justice, a warning that the history of my century has made palpable. I also think that "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" is profoundly stupid, enshrined though it is in some legal codes. For it wrongly pictures a universe of replicable experiences in which the punitive suffering of X both mimics and exactly balances the suffering X has caused Y. Even if I or an authorized proxy were to break my mugger's right humerus in two places, his suffering would not be identical to mine. And even if it were, it would not repay the multiple costs of my mugging. Nor would it permit my right arm to rotate upward behind my back.

One Sunday, during the worst of my convalescence, as my left hand was clumsily turning the pages of the newspaper, I came upon an article about an experiment in justice in Australia. Although new, it adapted indigenous practices from that country and New Zealand. A criminal and family, however defined, sit down with the crime victim and family, however defined. Together, they talk and invent an appropriate punishment for the criminal. It must serve a dual function: to recognize the harm he has done and to turn him away from doing more harm.

What if I had a place at such a table? What would my negotiating position be?

I would first learn if my mugger was an evil man. I had a conversation once with a friend who had served in the army and then owned a small grocery store. He had dealt with his portion of fraud, theft, and violence. "Ron," I asked, "what percentage of people do you think are truly evil?"

"Five percent," he answered quickly. "Five percent."

I would want to know if my mugger belonged to Ron's 5 percent. Did he willfully and frequently do harm to others? Did he take pleasure in his ugly power? Or was he blandly indifferent to its ugliness? If my mugger were among Ron's 5 percent, I would want him locked up. But if he weren't, I am skeptical about the expedience of paying for his room and board in prison.

I would instead require that he do more than understand the harm he has caused. He would have to drip with and smell the sweat of remorse. Then, as an act of contrition, he would perform grunt work in either the pediatric or geriatric wing of a hospital. He would be tautly supervised so that he could do no harm as he did his penance. He would toil until a jury of those whom he was serving concluded that he would be less likely to mug someone than to come to the aid of someone who had been mugged. The jury's verdict would not be innocence or guilt but capacity or incapacity for civilization. Only then would I get back what he really stole from me: not my keys or my money or my healthy rotator cuff, but my utopian confidence that civilization itself cannot be permanently knocked down.

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John Buchan

A Life at the Margins

DAVID CANNADINE

John Buchan, the author of *Prester John, The Thirty-Nine Steps, Greenmantle,* and *John Macnab,* was raised to the British peerage as Lord Tweedsmuir of Elsfield in 1935. He was the first male novelist this century to be thus ennobled, and there have been only two more since: C. P. Snow in 1964 and Jeffrey Archer in 1992. At first glance, they seem an oddly assorted and incongruous trio. When not writing the adventure yarns for which he was most famous in life, and which are still read more than half a century after his death, Buchan was a lawyer, a colonial administrator, a publisher, a historian, a fisherman, a mountaineer, a biographer, and a member of Parliament, and he ended his career with a proconsular flourish as governor-general of Canada. Along with being a novelist who specialized in stories set in what he called the "corridors of power," Snow was a Cambridge scientist, a wartime civil servant, a company director, a public commentator, and parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Technology in Harold Wilson's first Labour government. And in addition to producing a string of airport bookstore blockbusters, Jeffrey Archer has been a physical education instructor, a fund-raiser for good causes, an incorrigible self-publicist, an accident-prone politician, and a deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. All of which suggests that these men had nothing in common except their versatility, their widely read fiction, and their robes and coronets.

Yet despite the undoubted differences in their careers and their writings,

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the members of this peculiar trinity are in some suggestive ways rather similar figures. All three were born a long way from the heights of the British establishment, to the scaling of which they subsequently devoted much effort and energy: Buchan in the house of a Scottish clergyman, Snow in lower-middle-class Leicester, and Archer in the unfashionable seaside resort of Weston-super-Mare. Each married above his social station: Buchan to a cousin of the fabulously wealthy duke of Westminster, Snow to the daughter of an (admittedly impoverished) colonial administrator, and Archer to a middle-class graduate of St. Anne's College, Oxford. Although all three are best known for their novels, none was ennobled for his services to literature: Buchan never claimed his stories were great art, Snow's fiction was often criticized for its leaden prose and two-dimensional characters, and Archer's books are regularly trashed by the reviewers even as they sell in the millions. Yet all three regretted that their public careers, for which they *did* receive their peerages, were not more successful: Buchan neither reached the British cabinet nor became viceroy of India; Snow's reputation never recovered from his brief, unhappy spell at the Ministry of Technology; and Archer has yet to be given even minor government office.

These public disappointments were the more galling because all three enjoyed (and rather flaunted) their friendships with the prime ministers of their day—Buchan with Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, Snow with Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson, and Archer with Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Yet none was taken as seriously as he wanted as a man of affairs, and this may explain why failure is such an important subject in the fiction of all three. Buchan explored it at length in his last novel, *Sick Heart River* (published in the United States as *Mountain Meadow*), in which the hero, Sir Edward Leithen, gives up his languishing political career, heads for the Arctic to rescue a New York banker, and dies in the attempt. Many of Snow's characters, such as Paul Jago in academic life and Roger Quaife in politics, achieve less than they might have hoped. And Archer's stories are often built around high-stakes struggles for power or money in which there are always losers. But their novels are also peopled with figures who are much more successful in the world than they were themselves: Buchan's adventures are loaded with heroes who are effortlessly superior and self-assured; Snow's characters include brilliant scientists, masterly administrators, and consummate politicians; and many of Archer's cardboard creations wield the sort of power in politics and business that he has craved himself but never attained.

Humble birth and good marriage, worldly ambition and upward social mobility, bestsellerdom and public fame, career success and disappointment—these are the common themes of these three lives. As befits his position as the senior member of the trinity, Buchan has been the most fully (and the most controversially) investigated. In *Clubland*

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Heroes, published little more than a decade after his death, when his reputation was at its nadir, Buchan was assessed by Richard Usborne, in very hostile terms, as no better a novelist than Sapper and Dornford Yates, and as a snob who was, like his mindlessly philistine characters, obsessed with worldly success. Sometime later, in a justly influential essay, Gertrude Himmelfarb argued, less critically, that Buchan should be understood as the "last Victorian," a man with a "Tory imagination" who was in many ways ill at ease in the twentieth century, but she also drew attention to the anti-Semitism that she believed pervaded his novels.

Since these early detractors, Buchan has generally received more favorable treatment. In 1965, Janet Adam Smith, whose father had known Buchan well and who was herself a friend of Buchan's widow, published a sympathetic biography, based on unrestricted access to his papers, that stressed the range and versatility of his life, and largely acquitted him of the charge of anti-Semitism. In 1993, Jonathan Parry contended that Buchan was a serious political thinker and public moralist who stressed the importance of religious belief, proper education, and responsible leadership, if Britain was to function successfully as the mass democracy that it became after the Fourth Reform Act of 1918. Finally, in 1995, Andrew Lownie contributed to the Buchan rehabilitation with a new biography titled *John Buchan: Presbyterian Cavalier,* concentrating on Buchan's private life and public career rather than on his fiction.

Though Lownie was more sensitive than previous writers to the ups and downs of Buchan's life, the basic outlines are well known. Buchan was born in Perth in 1875, which means he was a near contemporary of Winston Churchill—with whom he never got on. His father was a dreamy, unworldly Presbyterian minister; his mother was more determined, and especially ambitious for John, who was her eldest, favorite, and most talented son. The family moved to Fife, and then to Glasgow. Buchan was an uncommonly gifted student, and in 1895 he won a scholarship to Brasenose College, Oxford, where he became something of an undergraduate prodigy. He took a first in Greats; was president of the Oxford Union; garnered a glittering array of university prizes; published several books of essays, poetry, history, and biography; was given his own entry in *Who's Who*; and was widely spoken of as a future prime minister. Few careers can have begun so triumphantly, and when he went down from Oxford in 1899, Buchan must have felt that the world was at his feet.

But compared with this brilliant dawn, the remainder of his life was a long anticlimax, as the heady expectations he had aroused in his golden youth, both in himself and in other people, were unfulfilled in his more pedestrian maturity. From the outset, Buchan found London much harder to storm than Oxford. He was unsure what he should do, tried too many things, and failed to find his feet. He took up the law, but

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passed his exams only on the second attempt and never became an important figure at the bar. His dabbles in journalism were uncertain; his early fiction brought him neither the royalties he needed nor the renown he craved; and his first attempt at large-scale biography, a study of Montrose, the seventeenth-century Scottish nobleman, was severely criticized for being superficial and biased.

At the age of 26, Buchan went to South Africa as private secretary to Lord Milner, but he stayed barely two years, acquired a mandarin outlook that would later make him ill suited to the rough and tumble of partisan politics, and was disappointed in his efforts to obtain a job on Lord Cromer's staff in Egypt. His mother disapproved of his marriage in 1907 to Susan Grosvenor, because she was aristocratic and Anglican, and his father died in 1911, followed one year later by his younger brother William. Lownie has perceptively suggested that these family troubles, and the resulting pressure on Buchan to make money and prove himself, may have brought on the duodenal ulcer that plagued him for the remainder of his life, with serious consequences for his public career. He had already failed to find a seat to contest in the two general elections of 1910, and thereafter his political ambitions were repeatedly thwarted by his suspect health.

But in 1914, having stalled for more than a decade, Buchan's career suddenly moved into higher gear. While convalescing from another bout of illness, he wrote a thriller titled *The Thirty-Nine Steps,* in which he introduced Richard Hannay, his most famous character, and pitted him against a German spy ring in a series of adventures, including murder in London, chases across the Galloway moors in Scotland, and the frequent use of disguise by both the hero and his enemies. The book was an instant success, sold twenty-five thousand copies within three months of publication, and became the first of a series of daring adventure stories that were to make his name and fortune, in which clean-living patriots battled with sinister (and often foreign) villains and averted the collapse of civilization—just in the nick of time.

Buchan's second stroke of luck that year was that war broke out. He volunteered, but was declared unfit for active service, which means that unlike such gilded contemporaries as Raymond Asquith and Lord Basil Blackwood—and his own younger brother Alistair, who was killed in 1917—he actually *survived.* At a series of desk jobs in London and in France he was actively involved in publicity and propaganda, and eventually became British director of information, based in the Foreign Office. He also wrote regular reports for the *Times* and the *Daily News,* and between 1915 and 1922 produced *A History of the Great War,* initially published in twenty-four parts and later reissued in four volumes. As a result, Buchan became a household name in official circles and among the general public. But he was often unwell, failed to gain any honors for

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his work (although he lobbied hard on his own behalf), and when hostilities ceased, his health collapsed again. Once more, he had to put aside his political ambitions. He did not stand at the 1918 general election, and his career still lacked momentum and direction.

Disillusioned with the intrigue and ingratitude of public service, Buchan left London, and in 1919 set himself up as an English country gentleman, buying Elsfield Manor, near Oxford. His books were now bringing him a substantial income, especially such adventure stories as *Huntingtower, The Three Hostages,* and *The Dancing Floor,* in which he repeated and developed the formula pioneered in *The Thirty-Nine Steps.* But he was also writing biographies, essays, and histories, and he was by this time a director of Nelson's, the publishing house, and deputy chairman of Reuters, the news agency. Nevertheless, he still hankered after a political career, and in 1927 his health seemed sufficiently restored for him to be elected Conservative MP for the Scottish Universities, an anomalously appropriate constituency, consisting only of alumni, that required minimal work from its representative. Five years later, he was appointed lord high commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland—a ceremonial position carrying no real power. In 1935—which was, incidentally, the year Alfred Hitchcock's classic film adaptation of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* was released—he accepted another largely ornamental (though grand-sounding) office, the governor-generalship of Canada. As Lord Tweedsmuir, he toured the dominion, wore a plumed hat, made speeches, shook hands, cut ribbons, completed his last biography (a life of the emperor Augustus), and was generally deemed to have done well in representing the Crown in Canada.

Buchan hoped this conscientious discharge of proconsular duties might lead to greater things, perhaps the British embassy in Washington, perhaps the Indian viceroyalty. Alas, his health continued to deteriorate, his literary earnings dropped sharply, and he felt cut off from events and people in Britain. It was in this depressed and disappointed mood that he completed *Sick Heart River* and his autobiography, *Memory Hold-the-Door* (published in the United States as *Pilgrim's Way*). By early 1940 he was ready to go home. But while preparing to depart, he died in February of that year, in Montreal. He was given a state funeral in Canada and a memorial service at Westminster Abbey, and his ashes were interred in Elsfield churchyard.

Buchan was scarcely sixty-five. What would have happened had he lived another decade or two? It is a tempting and instructive speculation. In my view, he would have been neither well enough nor weighty enough to have followed his predecessors, Lords Lansdowne, Minto, and Willingdon, from the governor-generalship of Canada to the Indian viceroyalty. He would have returned in September 1940 to a war-torn

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Britain, governed and galvanized by Churchill, and since their antipathy was mutual, it seems unlikely that further preferment would have come his way—least of all the Washington embassy.

At best, Buchan would have been fobbed off with a promotion in the peerage and perhaps the Order of the Thistle, and he would have gone back to his serious writing and his novels: finery, fiction, and frustration once again. It is equally difficult to imagine him living easily or selling well in the postwar world of Attlee's government, Indian independence, and the welfare state. The future belonged not to the old men in clubs but to the "new men" (another of C. P. Snow's phrases) in scientific laboratories and government departments. Still less would Buchan have approved of Ian Fleming's re-invention of the thriller in his James Bond novels, which concealed their substantial indebtedness to him by incorporating such un-Buchanesque subjects as sex and violence, unabashed materialism, excessively good living, and national decline.

But while Fleming's fiction is now out of fashion, and his life has recently been revealed as having been bleak and bitter, Buchan's reputation is steadily on the rise. As Lownie makes clear, Buchan's mind was cultivated and well stocked, and he regarded his public work as much more important than the fiction for which he became best known. Like many an ambitious Scot since the Act of Union with England in 1707, Buchan took the road south, and went out to the Empire, in search of fame and fortune. For someone from his relatively humble background, he achieved both in ample measure. But unlike many of the heroes in his novels, he had to work very hard for his successes, and it is plain from his letters that by the 1920s he had rather lost his way. It is not clear that Buchan ever satisfactorily worked out who he really was, and Lownie rightly stresses his elusive, chameleon-like capacity for blending in with his surroundings and his inability to make up his mind whether he was Scottish or English, Glasgow or Oxford, Presbyterian or Anglican, outsider or insider, realist or romantic, progressive or conservative, a man of action or a man of thought, a teller of tall stories or a writer of serious books. Paradoxical though it may seem, he was too versatile and adaptable for his own good—or for his own career.

We know now that Buchan's family life was less settled and serene than was previously supposed. His relations with his widowed mother were very close, yet also very difficult. She was ambitious for him and dependent on him; he was eager to get away from her narrow-minded views and constant interference but knew that was impossible. By the interwar years, she was becoming increasingly irritated at her son's lack of worldly progress and public recognition, which can hardly have been a comfort or help to him. When given his peerage in 1935, he revealingly remarked that it "may revive mother," and for a time, it did. Notwithstanding the advantages and connections it brought, there may also have

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been problems in Buchan's marriage: His wife was prone to depression, she had no enthusiasm for the Canadian governor-generalship, she spent much of her time there in bed, and she was disliked by her staff. Buchan was also a distant and domineering father, with predictable results: His daughter rushed into an unhappy marriage; one son went out to Uganda and took to drink; another was sent down from New College, Oxford; the third is quoted inveighing against his father's "cantankerousness," "filthy eating," and "eternal boasting." Only after his death did his children enjoy the room they needed to develop their own lives and talents and identities—especially William, who became a writer and publisher, and Alistair, an Oxford academic who is an expert on international relations.

What, then, of the public career by which Buchan set so much store? Lownie is surely correct in arguing that it was a success—but not as successful as Buchan (and many others) had hoped and expected. Buchan may have believed in the British Empire, and that he had an important part to play in its future, but for a man of his generation, he knew very little of it at firsthand, either as a traveler or as an administrator, and did not visit India, the Antipodes, or Africa north of the Zambezi. That someone of such limited experience should have cherished the belief that he might become viceroy of India was little short of absurd. His ambitions in British politics were no more realistic. To be sure, many people at Westminster and in Whitehall seem to have genuinely liked and admired him. Yet this did not mean they took him seriously as one of themselves. He may have cheered up MacDonald and Baldwin, drafted speeches for them, and passed on gossip, but they were not prepared to do anything beyond offering him the lord high commissionership to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When the proconsular Canadian job finally came up, it was at the initiative of the dominion prime minister rather than at the suggestion of the British government. Yet Canada was no place for anyone with driving ambitions in British politics. Buchan may have ended his life festooned with honors and caparisoned with splendidly sonorous offices, but this was not the real thing, not what Oxford had seemed to promise, and in his heart of hearts he knew it.

Although Buchan, like Snow and Archer, wrote with such apparent knowingness about public affairs and men of the world in his fiction, the reality was that he had little grasp of party or Parliament or power. As an MP, he never mastered the House of Commons, was often absent on business or because of recurrent ill health, and having been elected at the relatively advanced age of fifty-one, was too old for a junior position but insufficiently experienced for anything more senior. Although he was later to deny it in his autobiography, Buchan (to say nothing of his mother) was anxiously and ardently ambitious for cabinet rank (perhaps as secretary of state for Scotland, or president of the Board of Educa-

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tion). Lownie quotes some embarrassing letters in which Buchan importuned for office while affecting to deny that he was actually doing so. On several occasions, he seems to have thought that preferment was about to come his way. But he should have known better. Even in the consensual era of coalition National Governments, he was neither partisan enough nor tough enough to demand or deserve a place. Instead he was placated with ceremonial and ornamental positions that further reinforced his image as a lightweight, marginal figure, scribbling his stories on the edge of events.

The great irony of Buchan's life (and one that he would certainly not have appreciated) is that he wanted to be recognized and remembered as a man of affairs who wrote novels in his spare time, whereas in fact he was recognized and is remembered as a novelist who was a man of affairs in his spare time. It was important to him that he wrote on average a thriller a year between 1920 and 1935, but this was done primarily to finance his life as an Oxfordshire country gentleman, and to pay his sons' school fees. Buchan never expected these potboilers to be critical successes, which was just as well, since they never were. But why were they such popular successes? When Buchan wrote *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, stories dealing with spies, espionage, great-power rivalries, and worldwide conspiracies had already been pioneered and popularized by such writers as William Le Queux, Erskine Childers, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the era of growing international tensions and "invasion scares" before 1914. During the First World War and into the 1920s and 1930s, the public appetite for such thrillers increased still further, as thrones and dynasties tumbled in Europe, such irregular warriors as Aubrey Herbert and T. E. Lawrence emerged as national heroes, the Bolshevik "menace" emanating from Moscow seemed ever more sinister and subversive, and even the British Empire itself was challenged by nationalist movements in Ireland, Egypt, and India.

Although Buchan was never a spy, his wartime work meant that he knew enough about secret operations and international intrigue to turn out fictional accounts that were simultaneously preposterous and plausible—and thus exceptionally appealing. They were preposterous because the heroes and villains were at best two-dimensional, and the stories depended excessively on improbable coincidence. But they were plausible because they were set in a seemingly recognizable world of constant danger and uncertainty, because the heroes appeared to resemble the sort of men who had enabled Britain to win the First World War, and because—as befitted an admirer of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson—Buchan evoked so vividly the landscapes where the adventures took place, whether in the Scottish Highlands, the Greek islands, Latin America, the Near East, or Canada. Buchan called these

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books "shockers," to distinguish them from his serious writings. But their real attraction was that they were nothing of the sort. They were essentially juvenile fantasies, artfully embellished for adults, which comforted rather than jolted: Virtue wins out over evil in the end; the subversive conspiracies (usually of Jewish financiers or anarchists) are thwarted; those who live a healthy, open-air life vanquish effete, town-bred intellectuals or rootless plutocrats; and the natural order of things is safely and successfully reasserted. Thus described, his novels were indeed the products of a "Tory imagination," and it can hardly be coincidence that the interwar years of Buchan's bestsellerdom coincided with a virtually unbroken period of Conservative dominance in British government.

As befits the "last Victorian" he in some sense was, Buchan also needs to be understood in a nineteenth-century context. For while he may have been the prototypical novelist-notable of the twentieth century, there had been earlier precedents, most famously exemplified in the person and peerage of Benjamin Disraeli. The comparison between these two is instructive. Like Buchan, Disraeli was an outsider who married well and wanted to be a figure in the world, and he was no more made earl of Beaconsfield because he had written *Sybil* than Buchan was made Lord Tweedsmuir on account of *John Macnab.* But unlike Buchan, Disraeli had no doubt that politics was his life's consuming passion, and in his climb to the top he deployed a formidable combination of opportunism, artistry, and determination that Buchan could neither command nor comprehend. Buchan's strengths were that he was a good man with a good mind; that he was hard working, self-made, kindhearted, and uncomplaining; that he was uncommonly talented and versatile; and that his novels were (and still are) compellingly readable. His weaknesses were that he was insufficiently single-minded and that he was out of his depth in the political world. Like Snow and Archer, Buchan wanted to be at the center of things. His books and his baubles gave the impression that he was. But in reality he was almost always somewhere else.

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First Rain

BARBARA SWEENEY

It is a dress to be worn
by a free woman
in the black before dawn, liquid cool
and open down the back,
scented with the smell of heat
rising from stones.

It is silk in shifting patterns,
floor-length, ungathered, unadorned,
a dress that catches crystal
in its wake and shatters it,
and the shattering is sudden
and loud.

It is a chilled glass of a gown
cut for quenching the narrow moons
of prediction and reason,
stitched strong for dancing
out a strange, hot season,
looked forward to, whispered after.

Barbara Sweeney's work has appeared in the *Malahat Review, Yankee,* and the *Connecticut River Review.*

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Extrapolating Shakespeare

Let Will Enough Alone

J. C. FURNAS

During the Regency period, William Hazlitt devoted much of his career to reviewing the theaters of London, which, then as now, frequently produced Shakespeare. Ably as he handled the job, he came to take a dim view of it. The more he read and reread Shakespeare, the more keenly he felt that even the finest stagings amounted to "abuse of the poet." He was invariably stimulated by reading the plays, but he invariably felt "disappointment on seeing them acted." In fact (confessed the man whom Eric Bentley has called the "Father of dramatic criticism in our language"), were he not a theater critic, he would have preferred to stay home.

A generation later, Fanny Kemble, the princess of England's greatest Thespian dynasty—who had made her Covent Garden debut, at nineteen, as Juliet—shared Hazlitt's high opinion of Shakespeare as well as his low opinion of the way the plays were staged. The fumbles of her supporting casts eventually so exasperated her that she decided actors were simply not good enough for Shakespeare. Dropping the footlight-based career that had accorded her brilliant success, she turned to equal success, in both England and the United States, as a *reader* of Shakespeare.

Platform empty except for Miss Kemble, a table, a chair, a lamp, a large book—and the superb Kemble voice: "And gentlemen in England

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J. C. Furnas's *Fanny Kemble* received the Theatre Library Association's George Freedley Memorial Award in 1982 as an "outstanding contribution to the literature of the theatre." His most recent contribution to the SCHOLAR was "Virtucrats on the Loose" (Spring 1996).

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now abed / Shall think themselves accurst they were not here / And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks / That fought with us upon St. Crispin's Day. . . ." Or "The raven himself is hoarse / That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan / Under my battlements. . . . Unsex me here!" She could chill your backbone with her "Give me the daggers!" Since she was doing her best to purge Shakespeare of two centuries of claptrap and distortion, Hazlitt might well have applauded her rescue of what he and she held so dear. But after "Brava Fanny!" he might also have grumbled: "My dear lady, those words have even greater savor when only one's eyes, no ears intervening, absorb them from the page direct into the brain, with no second person interceding." In any case, I think it is safe to say that both Hazlitt and Kemble would have shaken their heads in melancholy unison at what so many of today's producers, directors, reviewers, scholars, teachers, and adapters know no better than to inflict on the hapless Swan of Avon.

My qualifications for sounding off on these matters, though shockingly slim, have at least had a long time to ripen. I was still in short pants—in 1915, or thereabouts—when I first explored my parents' thirty-seven-volume pocket edition of the First Folio. Avid rereading and rereading soon endowed me with an intimate grasp of their contents. No deliberate memorizing, however; mere verbal soaking was what suffused my brain tissues with indelible passages from (just to mention a few of my earliest favorites) *Macbeth, The Tempest, The Merchant of Venice,* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Thus, in my early teens, just after World War I, when the Robert Mantell touring company made its annual pilgrimage to my hometown of Indianapolis and I was given balcony seats for *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice,* I was utterly at home with the material. I felt nothing quite as sharp as Hazlitt's "disappointment"—but neither did I draw much pleasure from all that flabby stage bustle, implausible costuming, Gobbo and Malvolio failing to be funny. . . . John Barrymore's glowing *Hamlet* might have saved me from getting off on the wrong foot with stagings of Shakespeare, but that histrionic landmark had come and gone before my time.

A few years later, I found myself at college. The star turn of the Harvard freshman survey course on English literature was Professor George Lyman Kittredge, masterly lecturer and renowned authority on Shakespeare. Legions of my innocent classmates found him palatable enough to sign up the next year for his famous two-term course on Shakespeare. Not I. Well-versed in *Henry IV,* Parts I and II, I wanted no more of the spry old gentleman who saw fit to maintain that Shakespeare meant subtly to make Falstaff out a brave man, because, had he really been a coward, he wouldn't have been funny. My outrage at

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this lunacy left me with a lifelong allergy to the misguided ingenuity of scholars.

After I graduated from college, my original phobia—my disrelish, courtesy of Robert Mantell and Co., for twentieth-century stagings of Shakespeare—was resoundingly confirmed. The occasion was an "experimental-theater" *Hamlet*-in-modern-dress, imported to New York from London. For all the excitement generated by seeing Basil Sydney wearing plus fours when contemplating Yorick's skull, the production struck me as boneless and pointless. A few weeks more brought me an "expressionist" *Much Ado About Nothing* whose allegedly Russian overtones were supplied by a cast of nippy young actors in candy-colored costumes that blended Mardi Gras with Kate Greenaway. They bounced around as though the stage were a red-hot trampoline. Beatrice and Benedick were all but smothered.

Of further Shakespeare stagings in those formative years, I recall only David Warfield's pedestrian Shylock, a cumbrous *Macbeth* (Florence Reed sleepwalking), and a Slavophone *Othello* in a Moscow Park of Culture and Rest. (My tourist vocabulary enabled me to understand at least six words of the latter, so the actors' vocal projection must have been good.) When it came to Shakespeare on Broadway, however, the burned child was leery. My warm interest in the theater was more nourishingly satisfied by the likes of Eva Le Gallienne's *Liliom, Desire Under the Elms, Beggar on Horseback,* and *Waiting for Lefty,* about which I wrote freelance second thoughts for the Sunday papers.

Three years ago, over lunch, I was asked what I'd be writing next. I admitted a probably misguided inclination to contemplate what *Newsweek* has called the "Shakespeare Boom" and the *New York Times* has called the "recanonization of the Bard." (*Newsweek* also elected Shakespeare "Dead White Male of 1996." The *Washington Post* topped that with a premature "Greatest Genius of the Millennium.") "Runaway cult," I said. "Any day now its disciples will stage *The Merry Wives* with women playing men's roles and vice versa; Falstaff's buck-basket will be a dumpster marked DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION."

Next day my breakfast paper one-upped my peevish fantasy. It highly recommended the Chicago Goodman Memorial Theatre's staging of *The Merchant of Venice* as a multicultural "synthesis between the world of the play and our world" whose dialogue commented critically on the Federal Reserve Bank's handling of inflation.

That piece of intelligence broke down my misgivings about getting involved. Greedily I began mining my daily paper and my favorite newsmagazine—chief windows on the world of a sedentary nonagenarian—for coverage of stage projects that gilded Shakespeare's lilies with anachronistic or anomalous gimmicks. What that modern-dress *Hamlet* began

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nearly seventy years ago has metastasized into a frenetic infection from which poor Will may never recover.

The scale is formidable. One *New York Times* rundown listed summer-theater stages in forty-one states—many billing themselves as "The Alabama Shakespeare Theatre," "The Idaho Shakespeare Theatre," and so on—that among them planned to produce twenty-seven Shakespeare titles. In recent years the tone has been set by the late Joseph Papp's heroic and deservedly conspicuous staging of the entire canon, one by one. His unflagging devotion to what a sympathetic reviewer termed the "make-Shakespeare-fun" strategy has heavily influenced copycat productions from New England to southern California.

Macbeth has long been most favored for fun-making. In the last days of the WPA Theater, Orson Welles started the trend with an African-American *Macbeth* set in Haiti. Percy Hammond of the New York *Herald-Tribune* called it "a deluxe boondoggle." But that disapproval stood no chance against Welles's showmanship. Possibly recalling the tasteless smorgasbord of exotic peoples in the famous Midway of Chicago's 1893 World's Fair, he recruited for his cast a Haitian voodoo priest and an accompanying staff of goat-sacrificing acolytes. Welles's sacrilegious disregard for Haitian culture was an early example of the breach of interracial sensitivity that occurs all too often when African-American actors, patronizingly selected for their "surprise value," are dragooned into avant-garde Shakespearean productions. In the Santa Cruz Shakespeare Festival's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a black man played Titania in a fluffy white evening gown. Cross-gender, cross-dress, cross-race—what greater triumph could showmanly excess have?

When you're playing the *Macbeth* card, there are many clever ways to stack the deck. Macbeth has been a Zulu warrior, a Wall Street lawyer, and a Japanese gangster. Brooklyn's Kings County Shakespeare Company raised the usual ration of three witches to a dozen or so; they performed hither-thither dance numbers, with no discernible relation to the play, wearing ballet-style tights. Washington's Shakespeare Theatre, a spinoff from the august Folger Shakespeare Library, got the statutory number of witches right enough; it dressed them, however, not in the usual tatters but in jeans (for act 1) and evening gowns (for the climactic show-and-tell ceremonies). Manhattan's East Village Stage Company brought Lady Macbeth on stark naked. Perhaps the director was so pleased with his savings on the costume budget that he forgot to read Shakespeare's script, in which the Queen's nurse explicitly tells the doctor that her mistress always "throws on her night-gown" to go sleepwalking. (Note for nitpickers: Back then *night-gown* meant *dressing-gown*.) Or did he decide that prurient word of mouth would make it worthwhile thus to ruin the soul-warping soliloquy? In any case, the next morning's headline in the *New York Times* was: "LADY MACBETH, IT TURNS OUT, DIDN'T SLEEP IN PAJAMAS."

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Shakespeare couldn't have tried that one, since the Globe's "actresses" were all young men, and cross-undressing would have created considerable confusion. Cross-*dressing*, however, was something he understood thoroughly (think, for example, of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, who would have been played at the Globe by a man dressed up as a woman dressed up as a man.) But even Shakespeare might have scratched his head at Brooklyn's Kings County group, which turned Malvolio into Malvolia and *Much Ado*'s villainous Don Juan into Donna Juana, "a whip-wielding, nasty dominatrix" (as the *Times* described her). And what would he have made of *Desdemona*, an energetically cut-down version of *Othello*, produced in New York, in which three women performed every line—uttered by both male and female characters, of course—that hadn't been cut?

Brooklyn recently fielded a Portuguese-speaking Juliet yearning after Romeo from down in the garden, while he, admiring her, also in Portuguese, was already up in the balcony. The reviewer did what he could: "There was something to be said for hearing familiar things spoken in an unfamiliar tongue." Only he didn't say what. (He might have agreed with Hallie Flanagan, long ago director of Vassar's Experimental Theatre, who staged Euripides in the original Greek. When it was objected that few in the audience would understand a word, she said: "Plays would be better if you didn't understand well. Just had a powerful sense of what they mean.")

The San Diego Old Globe Theatre's *Twelfth Night* was vastly enhanced—or swamped—by extensive stretches of Duke Ellington music because the director saw a "natural parallel between Shakespeare's 'upstairs-downstairs' plot and the Duke's style." Of course; who wouldn't? And who wouldn't agree that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (presented at Washington's Shakespeare Theatre) should be set at a 1950s resort, with Master Ford wearing madras shorts and the final scene unfolding in the parking lot of a drive-in movie?

Though today's interpretations are particularly juicy, it must be admitted that Shakespearean gimmickry has its precedents. Restoration London fouled up the plays with elaborate musical numbers, plot changes, even happy endings. Georgian and Regency London favored such impudences as grandiose funeral processions for Juliet and kilts for Macbeth. But things didn't really get airborne until, say, eight or nine generations ago, when the Fourth Estate and the Academy were somehow lured into smothering the Bard in clotted, tedious adulation. As Hazlitt observed: "To know the force of human genius we should read Shakespeare. To see the insignificance of human learning we may study his commentators."

Lewis Carroll and Max Beerbohm snorted briefly at what George

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Bernard Shaw labeled "Bardolatry." H. L. Mencken called the cult "Talmudists." But the cult paid no heed, and its panting tributes flooded the world's bookstores, library stacks, newspaper morgues, and classrooms. A New Historicism scholar considers *The Tempest* "the profoundest exploration of the collision of the lettered and the unlettered worlds." A full-page ad in the *New York Times Book Review* headlined "CAN'T GET TO DARTMOUTH TO STUDY SHAKESPEARE?" offers sixteen taped lectures by Professor Peter Saccio for $99.95, *"Satisfaction guaranteed."* The lecture titled "The Plot of *Cymbeline*" takes forty minutes.

A certain logorrhea, possibly arboreal and persisting as a side effect of the notorious Dutch elm disease that ruined so many splendid trees on our college campuses, seems to afflict academia's vassals as well. Its symptoms are such printed lesions as "Decentering the Bard: The Dissemination of the Shakespearean Text" and "Teaching the Handsaw to Fly: Shakespeare as Hegemonic Instrument." (No cigar if you can't unravel that in five minutes.)

It is good or bad news, depending on one's point of view, that the theatrical director Charles Marowitz expresses confidence that mass boarding of the Shakespeare bandwagon will continue for another five hundred years, with "no shortage of scholars to point out the implications of Wittenberg [University] when Hamlet was supposed to have enrolled there." To paraphrase Scripture: "Ye know not what five hundred years may bring forth." But it is a depressingly good bet that it is bound to bring tens—nay, hundreds—of thousands of Ph.D. dissertations on William Shakespeare.

Here's an omen: A recent *Harvard Magazine* cover headline trumpeted Helen Vendler's "Ginsberg and Shakespeare," the A. Kingsley Porter Professor's elegy on the late Allan Ginsberg plus her three-thousand-word analysis of eight words from Shakespeare's Sonnet 30: "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought . . ." Apparently the magazine editors considered common parentage enough to account for this strange juxtaposition. Also bizarre was their comment that Professor Vendler's critical prowess might reflect her "studies in chemistry before she turned to literature." Campus-elm symptoms show in this representative swatch of her literary style: "The multi-layered self of Renaissance lyric, elaborated by Petrarch through Christian remorse . . . was secularized by Shakespeare into the assertion (formally made in this sonnet) that the self is a constantly self-recapitulating agency, and that its self-recapitulation is in the service of the psychic mastery of trauma."

Isn't it, though! Serious students, exposed to such statements, will likely show signs of the infection even if they leave the academy and become journalists. An editorial writer dismisses *The Tempest* as merely "an allegory about colonialism." A reviewer calls a recent staging of *A Winter's Tale* "a working out of Jungian primeval fears." A letter to the

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Times enlists a rival psychiatry by discerning that the "rue with a difference" that Ophelia recommends to Gertrude is an herbal contraceptive, an abortifacient, or perhaps a symbol of incest, "the theme of Hamlet's Freudian concerns." Freud pops in again in a review of a New York Shakespeare Festival *Richard III* that "abstractly charts the psychopathology of evil, from sheer childishness to pure id to the extreme consequences of contagion." (That's a fertile play: another analyst sees it as conveying not merely "the circularity of wars" but also "the enduring immortality of the universe.") And, just to show that even athletes are not immune to the disease, the fencing coach who trained the actors for the Hamlet-Laertes duel in a recent production of *Hamlet* noted proudly that his choreography expressed "the world spinning off its axis when society finally implodes and chaos reigns."

Chaos doubtless did reign last Halloween in New York City. The day before the event, the Central Park Conservancy announced that hired actors would perform "a series of scenes involving the scarier Shakespeare characters. . . . Shakespeare will narrate."

Now the inevitable question: How would Shakespeare have felt about all this? Would he have enjoyed narrating his scarier scenes in Central Park? Would he have applauded the more outrageous productions? Would he have sent in a check to Harrington's of Vermont, which offers mail-order packages of "ham-ends and pieces" called Ham-lettes?

I suspect he took his plays so much less seriously than did his later acolytes that he might not even have bothered shouting "Foul!" Shakespeare seems to have had little respect for the trade of play-carpenter, utterly neglecting to preserve its artifacts. It was his early printed verse, not the Desdemona death scene, that moved him to rank himself as a world-class figure: "Not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme . . . in the eyes of all posterity." Not a single word of any of the plays survives in his handwriting. Their preservation was left to others, who cobbled texts together from old promptbooks, catch-as-catch-can shorthand notes, and actors' memories. That haphazard process probably accounts for many of the inconsistencies and omissions that for centuries have inspired scholarly feuds. What about the children to whom Lady Macbeth claimed to have given suck? What made Macduff go scrambling off to England, leaving "All my pretty Chickens and their Damme" unprotected?

Since there is no authoritative Holy Writ to refer to, there can be no knowing whether a certain action-clogging joke was Shakespeare's—one of the thousand lines that Ben Jonson wished his friend Will had blotted—or some actor's ad-lib, mistakenly retained in performance. And such immortal flashes as Mistress Quickly's mourning for Falstaff may never have struck Shakespeare as more notable than any other verbal

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details; he may have seen them all merely as workable ploys that adapted prefab story lines into scripts that managed to keep the Globe's performance-today flag flying. This attitude could explain the throwaway titles he tossed at some of his jobs. Do *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night or What You Will* hint at career discontent? Does *Much Ado About Nothing* imply the pointlessness of the playwright's profession, or his secret reluctance to take the heroine's threatened virtue as seriously as he hoped the audience would?

The sins of modern acting would not have surprised Shakespeare in the least, for whenever his plays mention actors, the tone gets scornful. His Cleopatra fears lest as a trophy-captive in Rome she'll see some cross-dressed stripling, "some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I' the posture of a whore." Hamlet tells the players: "I had as lief / the town crier spoke my lines." And those often-quoted passages: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage . . . " and "All the world's a stage / And all its men and women merely players." *Merely* players.

Antony and Cleopatra, next to last in the Joseph Papp marathon, starred, and was directed by, the redoubtable Vanessa Redgrave. The reviewer thought her Cleopatra mostly too boisterous, but waxed ecstatic, justifiably for all I know, over the way she committed suicide. His enthusiasm did not, however, make me feel accurst because I was not there. I need no strapping genius to enact before my eyes what is better imagined. Hazlitt and I prefer pages 127–129 of the Porter-Clark First Folio's *Tragedie of Anthonie & Cleopatra:* "Give me my Robe, put on my Crowne, I have immortal longings in me. . . . I am Fire and Ayre; my other Elements / I give to baser life. . . . The stroke of Death is like a lover's pinch / which hurts and is desir'd." That nearly monosyllabic miracle conjures up for each his own Cleopatra, as real, though insubstantial, as the weird sisters' bloody child.

I think I see her now.

"Where, my lord?"

"In my mind's eye, Horatio."

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Voices of Science

DAVID LOCKE

It is one of the paradoxes of our time that as science has penetrated deeper and deeper into our lives, we have come, more and more, to fear and distrust it. Science seems to stand for the chill dehumanization of our modern world; its concerns—from the quark to the black hole—seem remote from our daily concerns and unrelenting in their consumption of our public resources. Of the many reasons for this growing alienation from science, one of the most significant, I believe, is the voice of science itself—or, at any rate, *one* of the voices of science, the one we might call its "official" voice.

This voice, with which science conducts its formal business—in its journals, in its academic lectures, at its annual meetings—is a studiedly impersonal one, designed to emphasize its vaunted objectivity. Since Heisenberg, twentieth-century science has agreed that the scientist cannot be separated from his science ("How can we know the dancer from the dance?"). Throughout most of its history, however, modern science has believed the opposite, and chosen a language to reflect that judgment. Michael Crichton, in his 1995 novel *The Lost World,* puts the matter neatly:

> Since Galileo, scientists had adopted the view that they were objective observers of the natural world. That was implicit in every aspect of their behavior, even the way they wrote scientific papers, saying things like "It was observed . . . " As if nobody had observed it.

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Although science itself may have begun to outgrow this parochial view of its own enterprise, it has been very slow to admit any corresponding change into its official language.

That language—policed by the referees and editorial boards of scientific publications—is what English teachers call agentless prose; that is, there is no designated agent for any of the actions it describes. Much of this is achieved, as Crichton notes, by the all-pervasive passive construction: one doesn't say that a real person has actually done something, one says that something was done. The nominalization of verbs similarly removes the scientist from his work: one doesn't say someone analyzes something, one simply labels the process "an analysis." Furthermore, objective observers do not issue value judgments, nor do they allow emotion to sully their rationality. And, finally, their chosen syntax proclaims their knowledge in ways that deliberately confound less knowledgeable readers. One favored device is the use of piled-up modifiers whose interrelationships can be deciphered only by an expert. Here is an example from a nuclear engineering publication: "A single small primary coolant helium core outlet temperature redistribution is experienced routinely during rise to power." Eight modifiers (not counting an indefinite article) employed to characterize one "redistribution," without a single comma or hyphen to suggest how the terms relate to one another!

All of this has its value—for the science. In suggesting that such language has certain effects, I said, out of convenience, that it was "designed," but it would be more accurate to say that it simply evolved as its users found it helpful to the enterprises in which they were engaged. As modern science gradually transformed from the genial activities of seventeenth-century gentlemen (in the Royal Society and the like) to the technical practices of today's professionals, its language needed less and less to convey the honor and candor of its practitioners and more and more to stress their impersonality and competence. Now the official voices of the "invisible colleges" that constitute the various disciplines of science serve as signs of mutual recognition that cement together the insiders and exclude the outsiders.

As useful as this is for the insiders, it proves disastrous in securing the sympathies of the outsiders. Nonscientists can understand scientific work today only when it is explained to them by other nonscientists, often journalists, rather than by the people who have actually done the work. Not only does the arcane jargon render scientific language unintelligible to the layman, but it prevents even scientists in closely related disciplines from keeping abreast of recent developments beyond the narrow boundaries of their own fields. Some scientific journals have come to recognize this problem themselves. *Nature,* which addresses a broad scientific readership, has begun a campaign to make its articles more readable by the nonspecialist, and *Physical Review Letters,* which addresses a wide segment

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of the physics community, insists that at least the opening paragraph of its submissions be accessible to any physicist.

The opacity of the official voice of science is not its only problem. Even less appealing is the picture of scientists that it presents. When judged by their language, scientists seem cold, dispassionate, disengaged from everything we feel puts life into our days. (Though we may not penetrate far into the jargon, we hear enough to be able to characterize the voice that is speaking over our heads.) If scientists sound so inhumane, why should we endorse their work? The official voice of science is not a voice to comfort us in the long night.

Fortunately, however, this is not the only voice of science.

Sciences—like other disciplines—go through growth phases, starting out as something new and unfamiliar, seeking adherents and struggling for allegiance, and finally becoming the shared working knowledge of a body of committed men and women. Once discipline building is over and consensus has been achieved, the official voice of science is employed. It emphasizes the standard nature of the work, its employment of appropriate methodology, its comfortable fit within its paradigm. It is the voice of what the noted historian of science Thomas Kuhn calls "normal" science.

In the early phases of its development, however, when a new scientific paradigm is trying to win converts, the official voice is unlikely to do the job. Then scientists are moved to write works that carry conviction and are widely read. Because it has not yet attained the level of acceptance that permits the verbal shorthand of the official voice, the new paradigm demands a revolutionary voice, one that speaks directly to its readers.

Kuhn himself puts the matter in terms of different genres—scientific papers versus popular books. Of the scientist engaged in normal science, he writes:

> No longer will his researches usually be embodied in books addressed, like Franklin's *Experiments* [*and Observations*] *on Electricity* or Darwin's *Origin of Species*, to anyone who might be interested in the subject matter of the field. Instead they will usually appear as brief articles addressed only to professional colleagues, the men whose knowledge of the shared paradigm can be assumed and who prove to be the only ones able to read the papers addressed to them.

In these remarks, Kuhn is associating popular books with a pre-paradigmatic phase characterized by conflicting "schools," none of which has yet achieved the level of allegiance it needs to be characterized as a paradigm. "Revolutionary" science comes into play, Kuhn argues, only at a later stage, when a prevailing paradigm is opposed by a new and chal-

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lenging counter-paradigm. Yet in my view, the counter-paradigm finds itself—like a science's early phase—in need of winning allegiance and gaining the kind of acceptance the paradigm can take for granted. Revolutionary science thus calls for its own revolutionary voice.

Certainly some of the great classics of science fall into that category. They are revolutionary science—or they *were* revolutionary science; today they represent the bedrock of our worldview, and they are written in language that violates every stricture of the official voice. (Some of them, to be sure, were written before that voice had fully hardened into its present rigidity, but even in their own day they were recognized as departures from the norms of scientific language.) What do these classics tell us about the kinds of voices in which science is capable of speaking?

Let us begin with Galileo, that storied martyr to the cause of modern science. In his great *Dialogue on the Two Chief Systems of the World,* which he completed in 1632, Galileo produced anything but agentless prose. In fact, he used three agents: a trio of interlocutors who debate the relative merits of the Copernican and the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic systems. Galileo hit upon the expedient of the interlocutors, none of whom is expressly identified with himself, to circumvent the Church's explicit injunction that he not espouse or teach the Copernican system. The power of the dialogue lies in the tension that results as it proves the superiority of the Copernican system while maintaining (with a conspiratorial wink to the "Discerning Reader") that it does not intend to do so. (The Discerning Reader has already absorbed some strong hints on how to interpret the text via a heavily ironic opening note, directly addressed to him, in which Galileo extravagantly praises the Church for its wisdom in condemning the Copernican system.)

Yet Galileo's interlocutors are not mere spokesmen for their cosmological viewpoints; they speak in distinct voices, reveal themselves as individuals to a considerable degree, and carry Galileo's several subtexts, which greatly enrich the work. Salviati, the Copernican, presents demonstrations, describes imagined experiments, and provides mathematical arguments to prove his points. He is the intelligent, witty—even sarcastic—"modern" scientist, who not only defends his conception of the solar system, but helps Galileo to reinvent science—or perhaps simply invent it—by rescuing "natural philosophy" from the control of the philosophers. In sharp contrast is his chief opponent, an Aristotelian aptly named Simplicio, whose principal mode of argument consists of generous quotations from Aristotle, usually peppered with Latin (the *Dialogue* was written in colloquial Italian). The two are intended markedly to distinguish the new scientist from the old philosopher.

Mediating between them, but at once perceiving the force of Salviati's argument, is Sagredo, a layman. From his expressed interests, it is easy to

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tell that he is an experienced man of the world, and he is clearly the one with whom the reader is expected to identify. While his main task is to reinforce Salviati's arguments, often with commonsense observations of his own, he also furthers another of Galileo's ends: to present the Renaissance view of man and his place in the universe, in contrast to the medieval view that it supplanted.

We often think of the Copernican system as having produced a terrible shock by moving Earth from the center of the solar system and reducing it to just another planet that circles the sun. Things are not quite that simple, however. In the Aristotelian cosmology, the materials of Earth are imperfect, changeable, subject to corruption and decay—quite unlike the sublime, unchanging heavens. Galileo, by contrast, gives Sagredo many speeches extolling the living, changing beauties of the world and contrasting them with the sterile perfections of the Aristotelian heavens. Sagredo praises man, too, not as a fallen, abject creature, but as a proud and creative force in the world. Salviati takes up this theme with a speech reminiscent of Shakespeare's "What a piece of work is a man!": "Then what is [a statue] in comparison with a man made by Nature, composed of so many members, external and internal, of so many muscles, tendons, nerves, bones, that serve so many and such diverse functions? And what shall we say of the senses, of spiritual power, and finally of the understanding?"

Dialogue on the Two Chief Systems of the World intends to ignite several revolutions, cultural as well as scientific, and adopts stylistically powerful voices to accomplish them, none of which is in the least official. Galileo's aims are not, to be sure, those of most modern scientific papers, and the dialogue is not a format open to them. There are other ways, however, to speak directly to the reader.

The persona of the scientific text need not be off-putting. Galileo's contemporary, William Harvey, is a case in point. In his great 1628 work *The Movement of the Heart and Blood,* his own voice is clearly audible. "Good God!" he says in exasperation at certain of his predecessors, "How do the mitral valves hinder the return of air, and not of blood?"

Harvey had a simpler problem than Galileo did: he merely had to demonstrate that the blood, when pumped from the heart, circulates through the body and returns to the heart to be pumped out again. This conclusion, however, was in direct conflict with the teachings of Aristotle and Galen as well as with the accepted wisdom of the day, which held that blood was continuously produced by the liver and consumed by the tissues. The problem, therefore, was an intimidating one: "What remains to be said . . . is of so novel and unheard-of character, that I not only fear injury to myself from the envy of a few, but I tremble lest I have mankind at large for my enemies."

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Harvey's solution to the problem is "ocular demonstrations." A dedicated anatomist and anatomical demonstrator, Harvey provides for the reader the vivid and highly convincing verbal equivalents of witnessing his actual demonstrations. Some experiments, involving the valves in the veins of the arm, he advises the reader to perform for himself: "In a living human subject select a place [in a ligated arm] where a second valve follows a first. . . ." In the end the reader emerges as the virtual witness of Harvey's demonstrations and cannot help but accede to the "truths" they so plainly display.

But Harvey, too, has a subtext: to stress the central importance of the heart in the living polity of the body. Adopting the monarchical iconography of the day that equates the king with the sun, Harvey, in his dedication of the work to King Charles, draws a threefold analogy: as the sun to the heavens, as the king to the kingdom, so the heart to the body. (No Copernican, Harvey refers to the sun's significance, not its location.) A confirmed loyalist, Harvey thus manages to affirm the value of the heart without sounding like a subversive. And he draws on these images to strengthen his text rhetorically at crucial moments: when he has completed his first assertion of the circulation of the blood ("This organ [the heart] deserves to be styled the starting point of life and the sun of our microcosm just as much as the sun deserves to be styled the heart of the world") and, again, in the closing chapter of the book ("Just as the king has the first and highest authority in the state, so the heart governs the whole body. It is . . . the source and root from which in the animal all power derives, and on which all power depends"). With such rhetoric—traditional in its political metaphors, revolutionary in its description of scientific demonstrations—Harvey's impassioned voice heightens the power of his text over the reader.

The conspicuous exception to the claim that revolutionary scientists write readable books is Isaac Newton. Though his *Principia,* published in 1687, surely introduced a scientific revolution, no one has ever called it a page-turner. Its ponderous Latin, as well as its insistence on presenting as geometrical proofs even those sections that did not require such treatment, were intended, like today's official voice of science, not to invite the casual reader but to exclude him:

> I had indeed composed the third book ["The System of the World"] in a popular method that it might be read by many; but afterwards, considering that such as had not sufficiently entered into the principles could not easily discern the strengths of the consequences, nor lay aside the prejudices to which they had been many years accustomed, therefore . . . I chose to reduce the substance of this book into the form of Propositions (in the mathematical way).

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Proud, secretive, and jealous, Newton hated challenge and controversy, but had been faced with both from his earliest days as a scientist. In the *Principia,* he wished to produce a monument, an unassailable structure, a formulation so beyond dispute that it would go unchallenged. He adopted the voice of geometry not only, as he says, to exclude the unprepared, but because geometric proofs are so universally acknowledged to be valid.

But Newton could unbend. His *Opticks* is a case in point. Although hardly as overwhelming in its implications as the *Principia, Opticks,* which was published in 1704, is in its own way equally revolutionary. Before Newton, white light was deemed pure and perfect; colored lights, contaminated or aberrant. The bold argument of *Opticks* is that white light is in fact a compound of colored lights—the colors of the spectrum. Although its points are in large part squeezed into the pattern of a geometry text, this book is vastly different from the *Principia.* It was written in English and was clearly intended to be read. Newton's evident experimental prowess and his equally evident pride in that prowess are what make *Opticks* so engaging. For instance, he describes with relish the pains he takes in grinding lenses and he observes, without false modesty, that his lenses are better than those of a "London artificer."

Although the prose in *Opticks* remains austere and mostly impersonal, from time to time we catch a glimpse of Newton the man: "A friend coming to visit me, I stopped him at the door, and before I told him what the colours were, or what I was doing, I asked him which of the two whites was the best." In fact, as the optical material fits less and less well into its geometric frame, the structure loosens considerably, until Newton finally breaks off and launches into a series of queries. At first, these present only his conjectures about the phenomena he is studying, but they soon proceed further afield. He allows himself to speculate on the causes of gravity; even his years of alchemical and biblical study leave their mark. We see in print, finally, Newton the great speculator, the "mind forever voyaging in strange seas of thought alone."

Why is *Opticks* so different from the *Principia?* Largely, perhaps, because Newton's circumstances were very different when he produced the two books. As he labored over the *Principia,* Newton was an established scientist and Lucasian professor at Cambridge, but he was hardly a public figure. When, seventeen years later, he put together his earlier optical works for a larger audience, he was master of the mint, president of the Royal Society, soon to be *Sir* Isaac Newton, the best known of English scientists, a magnetic figure on the London scene and on the eighteenth-century world's stage. This Newton could afford to lower his guard and deliver his revolutionary science in a voice designed to engage, not intimidate, the reader.

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Among the nineteenth century's major works of science, *The Origin of Species* must take pride of place. It is likely that no other scientific book has been before the public so consistently for so long. As Kuhn remarked, the *Origin* was intended for "anyone interested in the subject matter."

More has been written about Darwin as a writer than about any other scientist, and of course much of that commentary concentrates on the *Origin.* It is easy to see why. The amount of information Darwin assembled to support his argument is simply staggering—one has to keep reminding oneself that he considered the *Origin* merely an abstract of the "big" book that he put aside when Alfred Russel Wallace's development of a similar theory pressured him into churning out the *Origin.* Yet even though the material is dense, the prose is far from agentless. Darwin himself expressed his embarrassment when it was pointed out how often the first person appears. The book contains much gratifying nature writing, particularly in Darwin's empathetic personification of plants and animals, from the little tree repeatedly cropped by foraging animals, which "had, during many years, tried to raise its head above the stems of the heath, and had failed," to the ant with pupa in mouth, "an image of despair over its ravaged home."

The logical structure of the book reinforces the argument, and the tone rises significantly, and powerfully, at crucial points. When Darwin finishes laying out his theory completely for the first time, he presents a memorable extended metaphor likening the "affinities" of all living things to a "great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its everbranching and beautiful ramifications." He once remarked in a letter that a good book, like a fine day, should end with a sunset; the *Origin* ends with a moving coda—"There is grandeur in this view of life. . . . " Thus, Darwin rejects the official voice of science for one that speaks with particularity and emotion about ideas that in their day were to cause a revolution in how people thought about nature, religion, and the human race.

Darwin's day, however, was the nineteenth century. Does the twentieth century give us anything resembling the *Origin?* As late as 1900 Freud could write *The Interpretation of Dreams,* his breakthrough book, for a general audience, but as the twentieth century wore on, it became increasingly unlikely that a new scientific idea, however revolutionary, would make its first appearance in a book aimed at laymen. Such a book would not command scientific respect. Nonetheless, revolutionary scientists may still seek popular support through their writing—as in the case of Albert Einstein.

Einstein's scientific papers are too mathematical for most of us to read. To reach a wider public, however, he wrote several accounts of his

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work on relativity for lay audiences, the least specialized of which—*Relativity: The Special and the General Theory,* written in 1916—can be read by anyone with a high-school education. Einstein explained that he wrote these books because he felt that other popular accounts of his work, most of them by journalists, were unsatisfactory. And he wished people to understand properly, as well as they could without much mathematics, the meaning of what he had done.

The voice that Einstein adopts in the little book *Relativity* is kindly, patient, and avuncular. He often addresses the reader directly: "In your schooldays most of you who read this book made acquaintance with the noble building of Euclid's geometry, and you remember—perhaps with more respect than love—the magnificent structure, on the lofty staircase of which you were chased about for uncounted hours by conscientious teachers."

The book is in three parts, each derived from a scientific paper and following, as much as possible, that paper's logical plan. Thus we get the arguments essentially as Einstein intended them for his scientific audience. Significantly, each of the parts is constructed around a fundamental scientific problem that only his theory seems able to resolve—and in doing so fundamentally alters our ideas of space and time. The parts are themselves divided into small chapters, mini-essays, each explaining a single point and often employing a homespun analogy to make it understandable. In part one, for example, the constant velocity of light poses the problem. In Einstein's analogy, a man is walking forward on a train, and to measure his velocity with respect to the embankment, we have to add his walking speed to that of the train. Not so with light: its speed is the same whether measured from the moving train or from the embankment. A puzzlement. At this point, as Einstein says, relativity enters the "arena," riding, as it were, to the rescue. According to the special relativity theory, when one reference frame, like the train, is moving with respect to the other, like the embankment, with constant velocity and in a straight line, one cannot directly compare times and distances, but must instead apply the famous Lorentz transformation. The consequences of this are that in the "moving" reference frame, distances shorten and time slows (with respect to the other frame), and these changes accelerate as one approaches the velocity of light as a limit.

As the discussion proceeds, everything moves from the familiar and commonplace to the unfamiliar and unimaginable. Yet with the aid of Einstein's patient persona and helpful analogies, we are able to follow him without great difficulty. *Relativity* supports the notion that while "normal" scientists write for specialized audiences in an official voice, "revolutionary" scientists write books for broader audiences in an unofficial voice. But that leaves the matter of Einstein's scientific papers. As it

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happens, although the mathematics renders them inaccessible to the layman, they are hardly typical either.

Except for their requisite technical terminology, Einstein's papers little resemble those jargon-ridden, footnote-laden journal submissions that spend much of their length situating themselves within the literature of the field. (The special relativity paper acknowledges only helpful discussions with a friend.) Instead, they present their arguments in straightforward terms, and a number of them solve seemingly intractable problems with a single bold stroke that alters some of science's most cherished assumptions. They suggest that revolutionary science can employ a revolutionary voice even within the confines of a scientific paper. And this in turn suggests that the problem is not, as our previous examples might imply, a matter of genre—books versus papers—but a matter of voice. All one need do to shuck off the official voice is ignore the comfortable accoutrements of the paradigm and rely instead on the general laws of science, the rules of reason and common sense, and the shared knowledge of humanity.

There is probably no more famous molecular structure than the double helix of DNA, first described by Watson and Crick in 1953 in a two-page note in *Nature*. Aside from its great interest to scientists, this note has also stimulated, over the years, some half-dozen studies of its language (including one of my own). Titled simply "A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid," the note is of interest as a piece of writing in large part because of its irony and its deliberate use of understatement.

The paper opens with the declaration that it is suggesting a structure for DNA and adds, "The structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest." "Considerable" indeed—more like "earth-shaking." And near the end appears the statement that has been labeled "one of the most coy statements in the literature of science": "It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material." The fact that the bases appear only in certain pairs within the molecule at once seems to solve the great puzzle of how a molecule of genetic material duplicates itself, yet the Eureka! is never uttered, only implied.

Both the understatement and the ironies of the paper (especially its treatment of several rival DNA researchers) are readily apparent to the scientist reader, but not to the lay reader, unless he has been prepared by reading Watson's remarkable account of the whole DNA affair, *The Double Helix*. (Today's lay reader, to be sure, has been exposed to so much popular exposition of molecular biology that the matters of "considerable biological interest" are not the impenetrable mystery they might have been in 1953.) Watson reveals in *The Double Helix* that he had often daydreamed of composing just such a paper, and he praises the language

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of several of Linus Pauling's papers as "dazzling and full of rhetorical tricks," which he intended to emulate. He also describes writing the note and persuading Crick of the virtues of not discussing their discovery's biological implications at length, upon which Crick composes the "most coy" statement. In other words, the note's form is no happy accident. It carefully employs a voice deemed appropriate for what Watson labeled "perhaps the most famous event in biology since Darwin's book," and for what Crick described as finding "the secret of life."

Like the Watson-Crick note, "Spandrels of San Marco," a paper by Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin published in 1979 in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society,* gives official language a deliberately wide berth. This paper has become a minor classic in biology, and in a volume called *Understanding Scientific Prose,* thirteen writers independently analyze the language of the paper, each revealing different and surprising features.

The paper's revolutionary stance is to oppose the then more-or-less standard view of evolutionary biologists that every aspect of structure or behavior within an organism is specifically adaptive, a view Gould and Lewontin label the "adaptationist programme." They argue instead that various alternatives may arise, with any given feature being possibly necessitated by some law of growth or development (or of physics or chemistry) rather than being strictly adaptive. The central image of the paper, carried into the title, is the spandrels of the cathedral of San Marco in Venice, architectural features that resulted from fitting a round dome over four arches, which are decorated so appropriately to fit the oddly shaped surfaces that it seems as though the spandrels were designed to house the decoration, rather than the reverse. The analogy is that an organism's physical or behavioral trait may arise by some necessity that is as "architectural" as that which created the spandrels, while the apparent adaptivity may be as secondary as the spandrels' decoration.

The spandrel metaphor is urbane, sophisticated, and literate, unlike most scientific metaphors, which tend to be mundane and fairly obvious: oxygen "cycles"; electrons "flow" and "orbit" the nucleus. The context of architectural history and aesthetic sensibility within which the authors move is rarely invoked in a scientific paper. Also rarely invoked is the kind of literary allusion contained in the paper's full title: "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptationist Programme." It is not that scientists *never* make literary allusions—*quark* is drawn from *Finnegans Wake*—but that they seldom do so, at least in this fashion. For by alliteratively labeling their opponents with reference to *Candide*'s Dr. Pangloss, Gould and Lewontin wittily associate themselves with the sophisticated Voltaire, and their adversaries with his naive and blindly optimistic figure of ridicule. In the Panglossian

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world of the adaptationists, Gould and Lewontin suggest, every feature of every organism (in this best of all possible worlds) has been ideally adapted by natural selection.

To me, the most significant feature in the writing of "Spandrels" is the way its authors use language to characterize the thinking of the adaptationists as simplistic and their own thinking as broader, grander, more pluralistic. Take, for example, the paper's discussions of Aztec human sacrifices and of the aggressiveness of male bluebirds.

The adaptationist view is that the Aztec sacrifices, occasionally accompanied by instances of cannibalism, were adaptive in providing a measure of needed animal protein in the local diet. Gould and Lewontin ridicule this idea as suggesting "an unusual way to beef up the meat supply" and "a mighty poor way to run a butchery." Instead they opt for the view that the sacrifices were merely one aspect of a larger cultural practice, pursued for very different reasons.

In the reported bluebird experiments, a male bluebird showed decreased aggressiveness toward a stuffed male bird, placed near his nest at intervals as nest building and egg laying proceeded, and at the same times exhibited even more sharply declining aggressiveness toward his own mate in the presence of the "intruder." The adaptationist explanation? That once it became evident that the eggs containing the subject bluebird's genes were laid, there was no reason to worry about the rival for his mate's attention. The Gould-Lewontin view? That the subject male, on subsequent encounters with the stuffed bird, "approaches the model, tests it a bit, recognizes it as the same phoney he saw before, and doesn't bother his female." As in the sacrifice case, we are given an account of an adaptationist argument that common sense in itself seems to rule out. And, significantly, the voice that Gould and Lewontin employ to caricature their opponents' views uses contractions, puns, and slang: the tools of everyday talk.

Scientists, then, at least some of them, can write well—wittily, movingly, powerfully—when they choose to. Why, in that case, do we see so much scientific writing that is unreadable by anyone except the six other people in the world who are working on the same set of problems? Probably because it is exactly the kind of writing those six other people want. They are not looking for striking words that will challenge their thinking; they want something familiar from someone just like themselves. The rest of us are almost surely not going to read the paper anyway.

Matters will not improve until scientists who represent the established institutions are able to admit that their voices are dull, claustrophobic, confusing, and alienating. I believe the best way to make this happen—it will not be a comfortable exercise—is to ask them to listen to the voices of scientists who, because they had something novel to say, wrote things that we are actually able to read.

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The Meteorites

BRIAN DOYLE

The summer I was eighteen, hardly more than a child myself, I found myself ministering to a mob of boys, age four to six, who ran like deer, cried like infants, fought like cats, and cursed like stevedores. My first day as their camp counselor was utter chaos, in part because the boys were all wearing their names pinned to their chests on fluttering paper, and the papers flew off in the brisk early summer wind, and the pins stuck the boys, and they stuck each other with the pins, etc. But things settled down over the next few days, and we became easy with each other, as easy as a coltish and dreamy teenage boy can be with a gaggle of boys mere months, in some cases, from toddlerhood.

There was David, who hardly spoke, and Daniel, who spoke for him and who wept when he soiled himself once, too frightened to tell me his pressing need. David told me about it, quietly, touching me on the shoulder, whispering *Counselor, Danny needs you.* Daniel, five years old, was the first child I ever wiped clean, and I believe now that when we stood together in a sweltering dirty toilet on a July morning many years ago, Daniel sobbing convulsively as I washed him with a moist cloth, that we were engaged in a gentle sacrament: Daniel learning that he must confess to be cleansed, me understanding dimly that my silence with this weeping child was the first wise word I had ever spoken.

There was Anthony, a tough even then; and there were his running mates, brothers who guarded their real names and went by Tom and Tim; and there was Lucius, a long lock of a boy, closed for repairs all that summer, unwilling to be touched, first to lash out. There was Miguel, age

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four physically, age fourteen emotionally, who fell in love with the ethereally lovely teenage girl who ran the arts-and-crafts room. Miguel came to me one rainy morning and asked *Counselor, can you give me away?* I conducted negotiations, traded him, and saw him only occasionally the rest of the summer, usually trailing in the scented wake of his love, sucked along in her sweet eddy like a lifeboat trailing an exquisitely beautiful ocean liner. Although once, late in the afternoon, just as the buses were pulling away in pairs from the parking lot, I saw Miguel, alone, sitting in a front passenger seat, buckled in, hunched, sobbing; and for a moment, for all his eerie bravura, he was a baby again, frightened and bereft. I was not man enough myself then to go to him, and I drove away and left him in tears.

A sin: not my first, not my last.

There were Seth and Saul and Milton, who arrived together every morning in a large car driven by a silent man in a uniform, the boys spilling out of the car with gym bags intertwined like forest vines, the three of them inseparably tangled, yet apparently incapable of affection. They argued all day long in their shrill birdy voices, argued about balls and lanyards and swim trunks, about towels and mothers and thermos jugs, about sneakers and small gluey houses made of ice-cream sticks, argued all the way back to the elm tree where they waited late in the day for their driver, who never once opened his mouth, but drove up silently in the humming car, parked, emerged slowly from the front seat (unfolding himself in stages like an enormous jackknife), ushered the boys into the back seat (their thin sharp voices hammering away at each other like the jabs of featherweights), closed the back door (the camp air suddenly relieved of the shivered fragments of their tiny angers), plopped back into the front seat (the fat dark leather cushions exhaling sharply with a pneumatic hiss), and drove away (the long dark car dervishing the leaves of summer in its wake).

These then were the Meteorites, ten strong before we traded Miguel, nine strong on good days, that is to say the days when David's mother let him come to camp. She worried that he was autistic, which he was not, just quiet to the point of monastic silence, except when it came to jelly orgies, during which he howled as madly as his fellows as the jelly was cornered, slain, and gobbled raw. None of the Meteorites ate anything but jelly, sopping, dripping, quivering plates of it, attacked swiftly with white plastic spoons, the spoons clicking metronomically against their teeth, the vast cacophonous lunchroom filled to bursting with small sweating children shrieking and gulping down jelly as fast as they could get the shrieks out and the jelly in. In my first days in the jelly maelstrom, I raged at the boys as loudly as they howled at me; but by the end of the summer, I had learned to sit quietly and watch the waves of sound crash on

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the gooey tables, slide halfway up the long windows, and slowly recede.

Although I was by title a camp counselor, there was no camp proper at the camp, which was actually a vast estate owned by the town and rented out in the summer to an organization that offered the summer day-camp experience to children from three counties for six different fee scales, the lowest just manageable for poor families and the highest enough to buy a car. The estate house itself was enormous, labyrinthine, falling apart, very nearly a castle in its huge architectural inexplicability. Its unkempt grounds sprawled for many acres of fields, forests, and glades. Beneath the honeycombed house ran a small-gauge railroad that the childless owner had built for his nieces and nephews; it consisted of three cars, each as big as a sofa, and an ingeniously laid track that slipped in and out of the house and hill like a sinuous animal. The cars and track were, of course, expressly forbidden to campers and counselors alike, and so, in the way of all things forbidden, they were mesmerizingly alluring and were filled every evening with counselors in various states of undress and inebriation.

But the counselors in the railroad cars at night were only a fraction of the counselors as a whole, for most of us drove off in the afternoon in the camp's buses, carting home our charges and returning them sticky and tired to their parents. The buses peeled away two by two, and when they were gone, the camp stood nearly silent in the long afternoon light, bereft of the bustling populace of the day except, here and there in the forest fringes or sunning by the pool, a few counselors in entangled pairs. Once that summer I persuaded a friend to take my bus route, and I stayed at camp until dark. I clambered up the stairs inside the house as far as I could go, and then climbed out onto a roof and sat for hours, high above the tops of the oaks and maples, watching. I remember the long bars of slanting light, the sighing and snapping of the metal roof as it cooled from the roaring heat of the day, the soaring of a brown hawk over the farthest softball field, the burbling of three pigeons on a nearby roofline, the wriggles of marijuana smoke from the archery yard, the faint sounds of voices far below me, under the house, in the tunnels. When dusk came, I climbed down, leaving the roof to the pigeons. I could pick out the shapes of counselors against the hunched trees, some running, some walking arm-in-arm, the only lights in the thick grainy twilight the blazing ends of their cigarettes and joints, moving through the dark like meteorites. I found a friend and hitched a ride home.

The Meteorites and I were for the most part interested in the same things—games, balls, hawks, bones, food, trees, hats, buses, songs with snickered words about body functions, the girl who graced Miguel's dreams, and archery. They were absolutely *obsessed* with archery, although they could hardly handle even the tiniest bows, and even those bows

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mostly snapped emptily and whizzed over their ducking heads when they tried to draw back the strings, the arrows falling heavily to the ground without even a semblance of flight. When Meteorites ran away from the herd, which they did about once per week per boy, they could without fail be found in the archery alley, a broad grassy sward lined with stone walls and sheltered by sycamores whose fingers waved high above us and sent down shifting flitches of sunlight.

My great fear as counselor was that runaway boys would head either to the pool or through the woods to the highway, but they never did, not once. To the bows they went like arrows, and I would find them there a little later, watching the patient archery girl show them, for the hundredth time, how to grip the bow, how to notch the arrow to the string (the arrow shaking badly), how to pull the curve of the bow back to their sighting eye (their soprano grunts like the hoarse chuffing of pigeons as they hauled on the little bows with all the power they could muster), and how to loose the arrow with a flick of the fingers (a rain of bows in the air, a shower of arrows falling limply to the earth). At that point I would emerge from the sycamores and reclaim my lost Meteorite.

I don't remember that I ever scolded a runaway, for the archery girl was beautiful as well as gentle, and the archery lane a tranquil island. Years later, when I read books about the Middle Ages in England and France, filled with castles and falconry and archery and knights and such, my mind reflexively set the action in that quiet green alley where bows flew and arrows lay facedown in the grass. For all the violence of the sharp arrows that did, on rare occasions, actually puncture the hay-stuffed targets, the archery lane was a wonderfully peaceful place, and my mind wanders back there even now, from the chaos and hubbub of my middle years.

The days of the Meteorites were circumscribed by geography. We were to be in certain places at certain times—the basketball court in the early morning (dew on the court, a toad or two), the arts-and-crafts room mid-morning (Miguel's eyes riveted to the face of his beloved), the gym before lunch (the rubbery slam of dodge-balls against walls, the clatter of glasses flying to the floor when a small boy was hit full in the face), the softball field after lunch (languid, hot, song of cicadas), the pool (shimmering and cool and perfect) and archery lane in mid-afternoon, the basketball court again late in the day. I was nominally the basketball teacher, and so conducted ragged drills and motley scrimmages not only for the Meteorites, some of whom were barely bigger than the ball, but also for young Comets, Planets, and Asteroids (known to the rest of the camp as Hemorrhoids). I also coached the older boys, who came to the court in increasingly insolent waves, ending with my last class of the day, the Seniors, sneeringly fourteen and fifteen years old,

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some as tall and strong as their teacher, and one—only one, always one—determined to defeat his teacher in pitched combat.

That one was Andy, Randy Andy, sniggering scourge of the Senior Girls, artfully tousled black hair and pukka-shell necklace, quick fists and a switchblade carried for show. Andy stole a bus, stole money, groped girls, smoked dope, came to camp drunk, started a brushfire near the softball field, cursed the camp director, urinated on walls, crucified toads to trees, beat a smaller boy bloody, and, hours after he struck out near the end of a counselors-Seniors softball game, carefully smashed all sixteen of the camp's bats to splinters—sizes 24 (Pee Wee Reese model) through 42 (Richie Allen model).

I have sometimes imagined the dark poetry of that act, the camp silent after hours, Andy emerging from his hiding place in the estate house, strolling down through the gathering dusk to the softball fields, dragging out the dusty canvas bat bag from the equipment shed, selecting the Pee Wee Reese model (you want to start small before working up to Dick Allen), taking a couple of practice cuts, selecting a young oak to absorb the blow in its belly, and then the sick *crump* of bat barrel against tree bone and the sudden green welt lashed oozing into the oak, and then a second swing and crack and shatter as the bat explodes. Andy drops the shaggy handle, shakes his hands to shuck the sting, and reaches for a 26: a Luis Aparicio. And through the thin woods the sound of vengeance echoes for almost an hour, until darkness.

Andy and I hated each other from the first minute we met, as he slouched against a tree and muttered a joke under his breath while I explained a basketball drill to the restless Seniors. I was only a few years older than he was, and nervous, so I got in his face, and from that instant—a windy late afternoon in July, our faces an inch apart, his blackheads marching from one temple to another, my finger poking too hard into the little bowl of skin at the base of his throat—we were relentless enemies. It is a mark of my own chalky insecurity and mulish youth that I hounded Andy every chance I got, reporting his crimes to the director, ragging him from the sidelines of softball games, and once, by incredible luck, catching his fist in mid-blow (he was about to punch another boy for the second time) and so mortifying him before a girl, the ultimate humiliation for him and for me too, then. And now.

So every day at three o'clock, when the Seniors slouched up to my court and ran my drills and then circled watchfully as Andy and I stripped off our shirts to play one-on-one, there was the entrancing shock of possible blood in the air, and once there *was* blood in the air, mine. Andy waited patiently for the right long rebound and the right angle of me chasing it headlong, and as I lunged for the ball, he lashed his elbow into my mouth as hard as he could. But I won, and his hate rose another notch. I remember the garlic taste of my rage in my throat, and the tight

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circle of boys around us, staring, the only sounds the sharp shuffle of sneakers on pavement and the relentless hammer of the ball.

Flirting with the female lifeguards was a nearly universal and daily habit among the hundreds of male creatures at the camp. It was a rare male counselor who did not detour his charges past the pool on their way to anywhere else. Not even the camp director, an ebullient and brilliant con man named Buck, was immune. He arranged his office in such a way that his gaze naturally strolled out the open French doors of the house veranda and down a short flight of stone steps to the pool. He spun on his huge chair, his eyes on the bikinis in the middle distance, recruiting students *there is no camp on the entire North Shore that can offer the recreational and educational amenities we can,* charming parents *I understand that Marc has been named Camper of the Week three weeks running an unprecedented honor I may say and speaking of honor we would be honored to see you and Mr. Harrow at the annual Inner Circle dinner for special friends and benefactors,* chasing delinquent fees *I don't think you understand, Mrs. Kaplan, if we do not receive remuneration of your outstanding bill we will have to cancel Glen's pool privileges which will come as a terrible blow to the boy,* evading creditors *my accountant tells me that the check was delivered yesterday via registered mail,* arguing with his wife *you told the Kaufmans their twins could come free!?,* flirting with his wife *what say we knock off early and knock one off,* checking his toupee in the mirror *goddamned rugs,* writing camp advertisements *more than one hundred acres of fields and fun staffed by one hundred board-certified educators,* badgering food and gasoline and sports equipment and T-shirt vendors *yes, sixteen bats, various weights,* and placating angry parents *I can assure you Mrs. Steinberg that David's counselor was with him from the minute the accident occurred until his arrival at the oral surgeon's office, and that this young fellow, a Cornell University engineering major I might add, had foresightedly brought both of David's teeth with him in the ambulance.* At every possible opportunity, Buck sauntered down to the pool, ostensibly to check on the insurance, the floats, the filter, the schedule, but really to savor the lithe bodies of his female employees. Because the camp sat high on a windy hill not far from the ocean, it was cold in the morning, even in July and August, and the lifeguards wore their sweatsuits until noon or so. After a few weeks I noticed that Buck conducted all his business in the morning so that he could be at the pool in the afternoon, when the sweatsuits were off.

The geometric light of high summer, the smell of chlorine, the shouts of children in the shallow end, the cannonball geysers of older boys hurtling into the middle by the bobbined rope, the streaming hair of Senior girls emerging blinking from the deep end, I remember it all now, my mind back in the itchy young cat-body I had then. I am bouncing down the stone steps toward the pool, peeling off my wet shirt, one eye

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on the shambling parade of Meteorites behind me *watch the steps gentlemen the steps*, the other eye staring at the shadow between the breasts of a girl in a bright yellow bikini fifty feet away. I take the last four steps in a casual easy bound and then lean easily into the pool, shorts and socks and sneakers and all, and as I go under I can hear the high-pitched voices of my boys rising in wild amazement: *Counselor went in with his sneakers on . . . !*

Of course I fell in love that summer, led there by the Meteorites. For weeks they watched me stare helplessly at one of the lifeguards, a shy lovely girl, and then one day they somehow conspired among themselves to bring her to me. They led her by the hand up the rickety stone steps of the castle, up the balustrade, down a sagging wooden hall lined with sagging metal lockers, to our locker room, lined with sagging benches. I was slumped in the corner, adjusting the bandana I wore all that summer, waiting impatiently for the boys to change into their bathing trunks, their thin white slippery bodies like the startling white roots of plants just pulled from the ground. In walked Nancy, in her bathing suit. She was flanked by David and Daniel, who led her toward me by the hand, and then stepped back, Daniel giggling, David not.

I was very startled. There are few moments in life when you are idly dreaming about a book, a place, a meal, a girl, and you look up and there is your dream before you. Her hair was drying at the ends but still wet and tight to her head; one foot rested on the other as she leaned against a locker. Daniel was dancing about like an elf, quite proud of himself, but David was staring at me, waiting for something: a look I would not see again for twenty years, until one of my own children, at the same age, regarded me as soberly, with such powerful expectation.

Please sit down, here, sit here, move over Lucius, I say.

Lucius glares.

I'm so seeprised to sue you here, I say.

The boys giggle at my tangled tongue.

The boys told me you liked me very much, she says.

My God.

And I like you, she says. *Very much.*

My God.

I, I've liked you for a long time, I say.

And with that we rose, as if rising simultaneously was what we had in mind, as if we had agreed on something. We collected the boys (Tim was hiding behind the locker naked), and we paraded the Meteorites down the rickety stairs and toward the pool. Somewhere on the stairs we held hands, and so began that summer love, doomed and perfect, having much to do with the taste of sunburned skin, car radios, bitter words on lawns, letters on looseleaf paper, bright yellow notes on the driver's seat

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of my bus at dusk, her college boyfriend, her coy best friend, her mother's sharp eyes, the door of her room half-open, her shirt half-off, her face half-turned away.

The Meteorites are in their mid-twenties now, college graduates mostly, I would guess, and at work, married, in prison, who knows? I have thought about them every summer—summer brings me the Meteorites, ten strong always, Miguel still one of us—but I have never made the slightest effort to see them again. They would not remember me, and in their rangy men's bodies, long-boned, tending to first fat, I would not recognize the four- and five- and six-year-olds they were. Yet I think of them more every year. I have small children of my own now, and I am surrounded again by hubbub and jelly; and it is summer as I write, with the smell of hot afternoon on my shirt.

But there is more than memory here, more than nostalgia, more than a man's occasional yearning to be the quick boy he was. I learned about love, how to love, that summer—and not from the girl who came from the water, although I loved her and she me, for a time. No, I loved David because he loved Daniel; because David came to me that August morning and touched me on the shoulder and whispered *Counselor, Danny needs you;* because after I cleaned Daniel, in that filthy bathroom, David was waiting, his glasses askew, and when Daniel and I emerged into the clean sunshine, the boys embraced each other, their thin fluttering hands like birds on the bones of their shoulders.

Counselor, Danny needs you, spoken by a small boy on a high hill, and the four words fell from his mouth and were scattered by the four winds, years ago: but they have been a storm in me.

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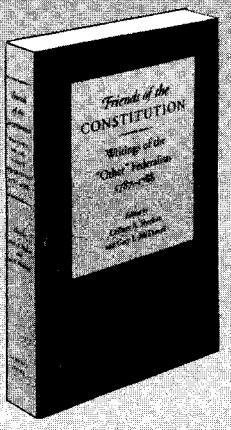

Though *The Federalist Papers* are rightly renowned as a primary exposition of the principles and purposes of the proposed United States Constitution, there were many writers other than John Jay, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton who in 1787 and 1788 argued for the Constitution's ratification. Indeed, as Herbert J. Storing, Jr. once observed, "[t]hese 'other' Federalist writings carried the main burden of the public defense of the proposed Constitution...[and] several of them were vastly more influential than *The Federalist*." In a collection that is certain to make a major contribution to our understanding of the American Founding, *Friends of the Constitution* brings together forty-nine of the most important of these "other" Federalists' writings. Included are the original texts of pamphlets, speeches, and other proratification writings of George Washington, Benjamin Rush, Nicholas Collin, John Dickinson, James Wilson, Tench Coxe, Benjamin Franklin, Noah Webster, Roger Sherman, Fisher Ames, Peletiah Webster, Samuel Tenny, Stephen Hopkins, Oliver Ellsworth, and David Ramsay. Separately they address the underlying themes of the historic Federalist/Anti-Federalist debate: "The Necessity of Union," "Energetic but Limited Government," and "Popular Government and Civic Virtue." The text includes Storing's important assessment of these writings, and the volume includes citations to Storing's monumental seven-volume *Complete Anti-Federalist*.

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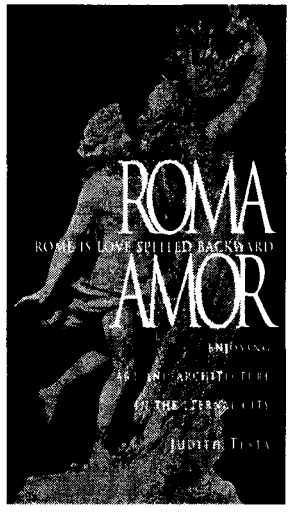

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THE UNCERTAIN ART

The Whole Law of Medicine

SHERWIN B. NULAND

Life is short, and the Art is long; the occasion fleeting; experience fallacious, and judgment difficult. The physician must not only be prepared to do what is right himself, but also to make the patient, the attendants, and the externals, cooperate.

The First Aphorism
Attributed to Hippocrates, c. 400 B.C.

It has long been accepted that a considerable portion of the body of writings credited to Hippocrates was in fact authored by others, in the two centuries following his death. But until recent decades, scholars remained convinced that reliable criteria were recognizable by which at least a certain core of the material might still be identified as his own. They set this group of texts off from the rest by calling it *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*.

English translations of these central teachings were inadequate and incomplete until the mid-nineteenth century, when the Sydenham Society of London commissioned the Scottish surgeon Francis Adams to provide a definitive edition. Published in 1849, the two-volume result of Adams's efforts—naturally called *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*—took its place as the authentic historic record.

During the present century, cracks began to appear in the supposed evidence by which some of even these "genuine" works had been certified into the canon, but the short book of pithy clinical maxims known as *The Aphorisms* held out longer than most. As recently as 1934, members of America's first think tank of medical historians, based at Johns Hopkins University, could write in their *Bulletin*: "It is almost universally agreed that among the many Hippocratic writings, the *Aphorisms* are genuine." The editors of the journal then went on to point out something that remains true to this day: "They are also undoubtedly by far the most popular books; printed, translated, and commented upon endless times, they were the physician's bible for many centuries." And in a little aside, they added the surprising—at least to me—statement that the introduction into English of the very word *aphorism* is owed to this "anthology of medical truths."

Nowadays, finding a historian who agrees that *The Aphorisms* was actually written by the legendary Father of Medicine is as unlikely as finding a clinical physician who agrees that all of the 422 nuggets of advice contained in its pages are "medical truths." Though enshrined in the tradition of almost two and a half millennia as the First Aphorism of Hippocrates, the words of this essay's epigraph, for example, were probably never uttered by their putative author. A few reasonably dependable bits of information are known about the great man's life: He was born about 460 B.C. on the Greek island of Cos; he was probably an intinerant physician; he seems to have been a leader in the formation of a school for the training of young doctors. We know little more than that, and what we do know most assuredly does not include hard evidence that Hippocrates left any identifiable corpus of written work. As for the clinical pearls of wisdom: Although some of them are nothing less than astonishing in the accuracy of their perceptiveness and the wisdom of their recommendations, others are so bewilderingly at odds with simple observation that they seem to have been inserted to keep the reader awake by making him laugh. What, for example, is a doctor to do with such pronouncements as "The bald are not subject to varicose veins" and "Stammerers are particularly liable to obstinate diarrhea"?

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All this having been said, the First Aphorism continues to stand by itself as a model of, of—well, of precisely that: the perfect aphorism, well deserving of its priority, which, if that 1934 issue of the *Bulletin of the Institute for the History of Medicine* is to be believed, places it squarely as being indeed *the* first of all time. An aphorism *should* stand by itself, without reference to anything preceding or following it, and it must express a timeless truth in a brief burst of sagacity, requiring no editorializing, interpretation, or further comment.

But, of course, the more memorable the aphorism, the more likely it is that editorializing, interpretation, and further comment will be its fate in perpetuity. Particularly when the epigrammatic saying incorporates principles that have guided a profession for two thousand years, as this one has, there is no end to the ways in which it is likely to be studied, discussed, and anatomized. Add to this its source in a classical language spoken by very few of those who would dissect its lesson, and the result is countless pages and perorations that have never added an iota of substance to the original.

In this it resembles the Hippocratic Oath, which has also been the object of much learned discourse and even a good deal of fretting, especially in today's ferment of anxious debate over assisted suicide, abortion, and other ethical issues for which the profession and the public seek a precedent in time-honored codes of behavior, or at least a guide to immutable principles of morality. Ethicists and others have worried the Oath as a dog worries a bone, craving the meat and marrow of some eternal principia with which to strengthen the ancient bonds of professional obligation. And yet even as their elders cleave to the Oath, recent classes of graduating medical students have not hesitated to "bring the text up to date" or "make it relevant to our needs" in order to reflect whatever acceptable current values they are willing to espouse in this self-absorbed era of moral relativism. Like scripture, the Oath is quoted by both sinners and saints. For every traditionalist, there is a revisionist who claims it to be interpretable or amenable to alteration as needed, often in ways different from what its original words would seem to imply. There is even a body of historical opinion holding that in its day, large sections (or perhaps all) of it were ignored by most physicians. But here the case of the First Aphorism differs markedly from that of the Oath: Though it has been the subject of plenty of discussion, there is little disagreement over the aphorism's intent.

Clearly, the First Aphorism was written by one or more wise and vastly experienced physicians, but its purpose was not to provide a moral precept. It was meant simply as a statement of what it is like to try to care for the sick. Not only does the aphorism avoid preachiness, but, quite to the contrary, it is a testimony to the humility with which a doctor should approach his calling, and a declaration of the profession's delineated capabilities. Its subtext is the very basis upon which these columns in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR have been given their title: the uncertainty inherent in the art of medicine.

In my view, the First Aphorism should be read to every beginning class on its initial morning of medical school. A student is then still a "civilian," one who has not yet absorbed so much as a particle of that fluctuating mix of science and art of which the profession has always consisted. From that hour forward, the values of the guild will soak ever more deeply into his or her mind and self-image, so that the end of the first academic year finds a young person vastly transformed. It would be good for that transformation to start with the First Aphorism—at the very least, a dawning of insight into what must be borne in mind if the task ahead is to be accomplished with scientific skill and humanity both, and with tolerance for the Art's limitations as well as one's own. It would be good, too, if the aphorism were to be reread yearly or even more often, that it might fix itself into the perceptions of the developing doctor so steadfastly as to remain ever in the forefront of thought. Like the Talmudic sage Hillel's response when he was challenged to summarize his religion while standing on one foot—that one never do to others what is hateful to oneself—the First Aphorism is medicine's whole law; the rest is commentary. Having learned that law, one should (as Hillel enjoined his challenger after both feet were back on the ground) go and study it.

The great majority of readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR being also civilians, it is more than a bit likely that the First Aphorism is unfamiliar to them. Perhaps those who have read

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this far are wondering why I am making such a pother about it. For them, and for me too, I should explain myself. In doing so, I may be able to explain also why I think these few phrases constitute the single most revealing statement that has ever been made about the practice of medicine and its goals.

The thing needs to be parsed. In doing so, I will deliberately avoid certain venerable scholarly differences of opinion about the proper translation of a few of the aphorism's words, relying instead on the English as it appears in the original Adams publication, which, with slight variations, is the commonly accepted version. What is more, this column of mine has only so much space allotted to it, which means that I can deal just now with only the first sentence. Life may be short, but I plan to make mine long enough to get back to that vastly important second section at another time.

Life is short, and the Art is long. Although life expectancy is currently twice what it was during the golden age of Greece, it will never be endowed with years enough for anyone to master the vast expanse of medical knowledge, or even that part of it sufficient for an individual doctor to care for all of his patients. In every era, some people live well beyond their expected span; Hippocrates himself seems to have been one hundred when he died in approximately 360 B.C. And yet even at the barest beginning of Western medicine's history, it was recognized that no man's lifetime was sufficient to learn all that was required.

In view of what comes next, it is pertinent to point out that some commentators have read these opening words in a different way, taking their meaning to be that medicine demands a certain amount of time to exert its healing powers, but the patient's life may be short once disease strikes. Either way, there is a realization here of the inconsistency between the time required and the time available, a factor over which no physician has control.

The occasion fleeting. Here, too, the focus is the urgency that exists in most medical situations, even those that are not acute emergencies. There is a finite period in the course of a disease (and for some, "fleeting" is indeed appropriate) when it is amenable to curative treatment. Although the window is considerably larger now in the late twentieth century, it is well known that timely diagnosis is a greater factor in outcome than is the treatment per se. When a patient presents himself to the physician beyond a certain point in the evolution of a disease process, the opportunity for a satisfactory result is diminished or lost. Just one year ago, statisticians in the Department of Health Studies at the University of Chicago pointed out in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that evaluations of cancer mortality in the United States between 1970 and 1994 demonstrated a "lack of substantial improvement over what treatment could already accomplish some decades ago." In addition to the best therapeutic methods and prevention, they urged "access to the earliest possible diagnosis." Looking from the opposite perspective, I have in my own career witnessed a decline in the long-term mortality of women with breast cancer, attributable for the most part to the fact that patients began in the late 1970s and early 1980s to be diagnosed at an earlier stage of the disease, thanks to increased public discussion and the widespread introduction of effective mammography.

Preach though he may about the necessity of early discovery and intervention, the physician may find that achieving this goal in an individual case is, by and large, beyond his control if his patient is not alert and informed. And even then, some pathologies are characterized by onsets so insidious that clues are absent until the situation is beyond retrieval. A man or woman presenting late in the course of a disease demands and deserves great efforts to heal, but the ineffectiveness of those efforts is not commonly a reflection of the quality of the care that has been given. Though physicians tend to flagellate themselves—and one another—over their inability to salvage a delayed presentation of sickness, such perceptions of personal failure are usually erroneous. Just as physicians must constantly admonish one another to seek the most subtle beginnings of disease, they must also forgive themselves when timing or circumstances frustrate their best intentions.

Experience fallacious. Though a physician's experience is, after science, his most important diagnostic and therapeutic armament, he should never allow himself to forget for a moment how it can lead him astray while caring for any one sick person, whose situation

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may present riddles that differ from everything he has learned at the bedsides of so many others. The issue of individual variation in patterns of illness has been addressed by authorities as widely dissimilar in perspective as Voltaire, the French literary savant, and Claude Bernard, the first of the great modern physiologists. Voltaire, addressing the insistence of some that a sickness be given the same treatment in everyone in whom it is discovered, wrote in 1723, "What they overlook is that the diseases which afflict us are as different as the features of our faces." In his seminal mid-nineteenth-century guide to physiological research, *Experimental Medicine,* Bernard made the same observation, based on his investigations into human biology: "A physician . . . is by no means a physician to living beings in general, not even physician to the human race, but rather, physician to a human individual, and still more physician to an individual in certain morbid conditions peculiar to himself and forming what is called his idiosyncrasy."

Experience may be misinterpreted, misremembered, and even misused, though unwittingly. Statistics, which are the recorded and combined experiences of many disease encounters, suffer from their own disabilities, including on the one hand the blending of categories of patients whose problems do not belong together, and on the other the omitting of the experiences of certain types of patients in a well-intentioned attempt to avoid precisely such inappropriate admixing. For any specific person suffering from a specific disease in a specific setting being treated in a specific environment by a specific doctor, a statistic is nothing more than a statement of relative probability.

Judgment difficult. For any bedside doctor, these two words are the distilled essence of the First Aphorism and, in fact, of all medical care; everything coming before them is merely prologue. Judgment is focused on the immediacy of the moment; the distinctive evolution of the disease in one distinctive human being leading up to that moment; the facts of the pathological process as they reveal themselves, also at that moment; the inferences drawn from the facts; the patient's emotional and biological response to the illness; the circumstances in which the encounter occurs; and the personal background brought by the physician to this critical instant in his patient's illness—and in his own life.

Aside from considerations of experience and knowledge, not much attention has ever been paid to the final factor in the foregoing list, and yet none of the others (excepting only the pathology itself) exceeds it in importance. Although a great deal has been written about the so-called doctor-patient relationship, I have encountered very little recognition of the reciprocal nature of that relationship—of its essential interdependency.

Three decades ago, I cared for an astonishingly perceptive university chaplain during the course of a protracted hospitalization, at the conclusion of which he made a number of trenchant observations about the medical team. Among his comments was one whose validity I have had plenty of opportunity to confirm since that time. "We patients," he said, "do more for you doctors than you do for us." What he was recognizing, of course, was our outsize need for the emotional rewards not only of overcoming disease, but also of being healthy and strong while those who are dependent on us are diminished by their illnesses. The effect on medical care of the relationship between power and impotence is an unacknowledged thread that runs through the practice of the Art, as is our insatiable appetite for extravagant gratitude and the constant burnishing of our self-image. And these are only a few of the unstudied influences with which every linkage between doctor and patient is imbued.

There is little significant literature examining the psychology of those who choose medicine as a career, much less one or another of its specialties. Few have seriously asked, "Who are these people, and what drives them?" Whatever distancing or objectivity has been introduced into medical practice by the current array of instrumentations and intradisciplinary fragmenting, it is human beings who make the ultimate decisions about diagnosis and therapy. And they make them against the background of their own emotions, needs, insecurities, strengths, strivings, and—even in these days of Freud-bashing, it must be said—their own transferences to and identifications with those whose lives are in their hands.

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Self-awareness has never been the strong suit of those who choose to become doctors. When so much fuel is readily available for stoking the fires of ego, there is little inclination to apply it in raising the candlepower of the searching light that might illumine the inner man or woman. I would venture to guess that the percentage of unexamined lives in my profession is shockingly high. And yet the rewards of identifying and facing one's own motivations and tremblings are enormous. I refer here not to some idealized hope of overcoming what is undesirable in ourselves, but rather to the more practical wish that physicians might pursue self-knowledge with a distinctly clinical aim in mind: to help us understand what can be brought to consciousness about why we incline one way or another in the choice of pathways along which we send our patients. Judgment is difficult enough without adding to the problem by further obscuring the dimly recognized or unspoken motives that may influence it. As the aphorism says, the Art is long, and there is little we are able to do about the shortness of our own lives. But we can deepen our understanding of ourselves, and in this way deepen our ability to help our patients, and add breadth to the value of our days.

Doctors expect a great deal of themselves. Patients expect a great deal of their doctors. As has been true since the time of Hippocrates, some of those expectations are unrealistic, while others might best be met by a more frequent inward focus, a bit more understanding of one another, and a mutual recognition of what is possible and what is not. This, I believe, is the ultimate message in the First Aphorism, and the reason it will always be the whole law of medicine. We should enjoin ourselves—doctors and patients alike—to go and study it.

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EDWARD
HOAGLAND

January 1: We are closest to the sun today—the Earth, that is—but it's zero outside; and we'll be farthest from the sun early next July!

Am told by Microsoft to break up my India essay into 600-word segments because nobody reads more than 600 words on the Internet.

By gaping its mouth, a snake (whether garter or python) can shift the position of troublesome food in its stomach and free itself of gas. It works its muscles up and down the tube of itself, like fist-clenching, while burping and adjusting a gorged meal.

Wally, like Smoky before him, spends last weeks of life soaking pained torso in the snow to anesthetize cancer's ache.

I remember Skook's greatest regret, on the Big Muddy River, was losing his temper one time and shooting his loyal little dog because it had stolen his supper bacon one cold hungry night. Couldn't take the bullet back. (Not the men he'd seen killed.)

January 17: Red-tailed hawk with meat in fist low over woods. Crowd of Canada geese sheltering in zero weather at North Bennington waterfall.

Tottering officiously just to keep upright, Wally approached death with the dignity and independence with which he'd lived. Ate snow again to freeze the innards' pain; went off all one January day to die, but came back near sunset not having succeeded; then slept peacefully that night, so worn out. Hadn't eaten for four days or drunk in one. He went with us to vet next morning, and was stoic as always, but seemed to growl at the last, realizing that the lethal injection had betrayed him, as his consciousness faded, or perhaps it was the rattle of trying to breathe. He'd always insisted the relationship between us should be friendship, not slavery: a very light, qualified vassalage. If he thought that you were calling him to pen him in on a bright, balmy day, he would simply take off in the opposite direction.

Aristaneminatha, a contemporary of Krishna and one of the founders of Jainism, renounced the world on his wedding day, when he heard the cries of the animals that were being sacrificed for the service and then the feast.

Galaxies contain constellations; constellations, solar systems.

Four-point buck and three does hang out together on this hundred acres in January. Eat grass when ground is bare; brush when snow is tough. Death of Wally eases their lot.

Late January, captive male garter snake now fully acclimated; last of his feed worms are gone. To be human is to care for things that don't care for you.

Travel is so much too fast now that I try to slow it down by early arrivals, long waits between flights, stopovers in London or wherever.

February 18: A nice thaw, bluebirds are busy preparing the closest nest box, which they

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never end up using in the summer, because it's *too* close.

A chess master against a computer is like John Henry against the pile driver.

The word *gas* comes from *chaos.*

Pisé = rammed earth.

Computer-phobe, homophobe: the newest way to denigrate anybody who disagrees with you. It's not disagreement; it's a "phobia."

My neighbor Foley in Korea: The first Monday of each month for five months, the Korean Marines would shoot all the prostitutes in town who had been found to have VD, in the schoolyard, and leave the bodies for a day as an example (claiming the North had injected and sent them south). They were led out and had to kneel and a lieutenant walked behind them with a pistol. Foley's photos and camera were seized. Another atrocity: Somebody stealing airplane kerosene from a pipeline for heating oil for the village opened a joint too much and filled a trench with leakage, which everyone ran to fill their jugs from, in order to survive the winter's temperature. A hundred or two hundred were there when a South Korean lieutenant told them to stop. Angry at their "stealing," he suddenly took out his cigarette lighter and threw it into the trench, and the whole thing exploded, and the villagers fled on fire.

Foley says a Brownington Indian taught him to trap, and the scent lure that he used was cut-up kittens put into a canning jar a couple of months before.

Earliest known gliding reptile: 250 million years ago. *Coelurosouravus.*

March 12: Two coyotes cross the field in morning between 7 and 8. People's houses are irrelevancies to them (except that they are wary), whereas a dog crossing the field would always regard the house as its central feature; the locus of power and politics and food; a magnetic field and hierarchy. A snowfall and cold snap presumably brought them out, a pinch of hunger after the mild winter, and midway in the female's pregnancy, when she's still mobile.

A wasp on March 19, and a lot more birdsong.

March 22: Even the cold days no longer have such conviction. Slush freezes but quickly melts again; the snow has lost authority and coherence. The ten local deer and my pet pair of crows have come through winter in fine shape. People are having their last "slide parties," where they slide down hills in inner tubes, toboggans, etc. A mild January and early February thaw this year, but obdurate March. The sun's mathematics are irresistible, however, and even the turkeys and opossums must have had no weeks when they couldn't reach the surface of the ground to feed. Comet stands each early morning in the sky.

Some people say a comet started life; some people say that lightning started life. Some say both: the comet to provide water, the lightning the spark.

How we loathe the proteins of others! Foreign saliva in a bowl of soup or on the rim of a juice glass.

My mother, trying to help my career, once tucked a note inside a pack of cigarettes and gave the pack to James Reston, of the *New York Times,* at a party, suggesting he hire me.

April 4: Chorus of wood frogs in front of Wayne's. Woods trails glistening with running water. Next day, peepers chime in. Red squirrels run to maple trees in field and bite off high twigs to suck the sap when it runs, despite the danger to them from hawks when they do so. Sapsuckers drilling apple trees. Phoebes hang out on sun-warmed slopes of roof, east and south, where early insects, too, congregate, flying to their deaths. Bobcat creeps along stone wall line at edge of field. Six coyotes chasing doe. Snipe like a lariat in mating flight; woodcock circles up and down in narrower funnel. Find bobcat's probable den under hillside ledge overlooking two supermarkets across Walloomsac River.

April 6: Geese barking overhead; mourning doves pursuing each other on ground as obses-

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sively as city pigeons. One thousand days until the millennium!

The emphasis of medical research is still, so shrilly, to prolong human life and diversify the possibilities of attenuated survival, when the real, looming problem is to *shorten* it, or at least to *thin us out,* lest famine and environmental collapse come. Comparably, we cheer the possibility of primitive life on other planets, while obliviously losing dozens of more complex, potentially interesting species every day here on earth.

In my sixties it's a new experience not to feel twinges of envy when seeing long encomiums to other artists in the newspaper: they're often obituaries, and I don't feel jealous a bit; I'm happy to be alive in my obscurity rather than joining the famous dead. God bless them, poor lauded folk.

First ladybugs. I cease birdfeeding: cowbirds monopolizing it; a pretty song, but bad actions.

First worm under a stone.

Crows holler when coyotes howl, not in objection but a parallel affinity, maybe.

Marion's throat cancer, predating her fatal colon cancer, may have been caused by radiation treatments when she was a child for her acne, then a popular remedy in the Bronx.

Updike on 65th birthday says that previous Saturday his wife arranged a party at their club of all his four children and five grandchildren (all male) and one stepson; and it was "tense-making," but still they were arrayed before him. In two-hour visits pays better attention to each grandchild than he did to his own poor kids, he says regretfully, as always now. Sounds peppy though, and cheerful, and as always is pushing to complete the day's bit of work, the year's book. The oblique, opaque personal life serving the oeuvre.

Ullage. Pheromone. Pretermit.

Wayne's father divorced his mother, after ten years of marriage, even before he was born. Though punctually he paid support payments for the next two decades (and it was no secret that he *was* his father), he never invited the boy for a meal or to visit his new house and childless marriage: just occasionally waved to him, in the waterfront town of Camden, Maine, on his route as a delivery driver for Railway Express.

April 23: Male rufous-sided towhee crashes fatally into glass door. Beautiful black and white and rufous, striking and dashing mating colors.

Inadvertently, yesterday, I put two mice in the python's cage at once; and instead of being panic-stricken at the fate of the first to be eaten, the survivor kept trying to assist or "comfort" its lifeless body as it went down the gullet, trying to help or rescue it, ascertain what was wrong, nosing it, putting a paw on it, mildly but physically trying to persuade the snake to reverse the terrible process. Only after it was gone did terror strike.

Snakeskins are woven into some flycatchers' nests.

My Swiss knife key ring finally breaks that Marion gave me 20 years ago.

May 23: Birds have full possession now, not just the early redwings and robins, song sparrows and whitethroats, and the permanent ravens and jays, grouse and cardinals, but barn swallows and winter wrens and ovenbirds, chipping sparrows and black-throated green and black-and-white warblers in quantity, and buntings, vireos, and wood and hermit thrushes. Mice, though, are still in possession of my snakes' hangouts, under the strips of roofing tin: the snakes being still underground, like Antaeus.

Last year's painted turtle eggs are hatching at Bennington pond, a few days ahead of *this* year's communal egg laying. Kingbirds and goldfinches visibly exulting in presence of new bugs and dandelion seeds; towhees audibly present. Phoebes are more housebound hunters. Slugs are still small but delicious to turtles, etc. Red squirrel domestic in bluebird box it has taken over, as the reddish woodmouse is in

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another. Poor bluebirds have just one box left. Apple blossoms fading, but lilacs are peaking. Carrots and lettuce and tomato plants planted; Trudy's back is stiff. I'm cheered by a clean colonoscopy, at 64, but my mother's dying, at 95. *Hers* lived till 93.

Acedia. Occultation. Alutiiq.

In prose, the pronoun *I* is like a dumbbell. You lift and flex it.

Thoreau was Gandhi's vade mecum.

A curious seesaw: As gender differences are played down, sexual activity goes up. Of course, not a real mystery; it has to do with the unraveling of all certainties and traditions.

April Fool's Day joke in Sitka. Airlifting a ton of rubber tires into the volcanic cone of Mount Edgecumbe and setting them on fire, so that people woke up to see their local volcano, dormant for 8,000 years, smoking!

From observing them, I believe earthworms have a crude power of scent, and also a sense of communal life, an awareness of each other as fellow worms and a comfort in each other's presence, though possibly a territorial imperative too, under beneficial circumstances.

Sissiparous.

In Pennsylvania they built their houses of stone and their fences of wood; in New England, the reverse.

Worldwide, there are 1,800 thunderstorms on an average day.

June 28: Goldfinches in the seedheads, and yellow sulphur butterflies. Blue hot skies; browning grasses high enough to hide a fawn. Coyotes get the dog all antsy at night, while hunting mice. Fireflies.

Misprision. Scission.

Pick up a few mouse droppings by mistake, when adding spilled instant-coffee crystals to my cup.

Fourth of July: pasture roses, hawkweed, white admiral butterflies, fireflies, daisies, blue vetch flowers, purple mallow. Irises and first lilies. Ladyferns under oaks in full spread.

Class distinctions: we see a young man with a pack on his back and we know we needn't fear. He is a college boy.

July 31: Donald Nault catches six square-tailed trout and gives me the biggest, which turns out to be a female with about a hundred eggs inside her. A lovely green creature with yellow spots; reddish tint to white belly and white-edged belly fins. A little less than ten inches long. The essence of amber-greeny running water. And of course I'm sad she's caught.

I guess "wind chill" doesn't operate for reptiles because they aren't heating their own bodies; nor are they customarily wet, like amphibians.

"Your highness"—what a peculiarly rudimentary phrase.

Hippie colonies reproduce by means of rhizomes.

Forty gallons of maple sap make one gallon of syrup.

Why is a Scottish accent so much less sexy (in women) than an English accent?

Muktuk. Curtilage. Judder.

"I did a lot of elephants," Bill Ballantine, circus artist, keeps saying, as Alzheimer's overtakes him. Like a line from an Absurdist play, but more than that.

August 18: Both sparrow hawks and red-tails are much in the sky, darting about, the year's babies learning to fly, hunt, maneuver, and swoop.

Reggie says his job with Green Berets in Vietnam was assassinating village elders who might prove undependable to U.S. side. Told who the target was, dropped behind lines, go to hamlet, make friends, shoot the guy in wee hours with

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silencer, and then start running to be long gone by dawn.

There is more salamander biomass in black-bear country than bear biomass.

Go mushrooming on August 19 with Nancy Tanner and find no notably edible species but identify *Leccinum scabrum, Boletus retipes,* Scaly Chanterelles, a *Lactarius,* and two *Russulas.* Squirrels or slugs had already nibbled many.

"Whoopie-ti-yi-o, it's your misfortune and none of my own": the old cowboy song sums up our detachment from the crash of other animal life.

"Sneakers, shoes, moccasins," says Peter to the Customs man, smuggling a water moccasin across the border.

A trapper has scattered beaver feet, hands, and torsos near my house in retaliation for my anti-hound-hunting letter to the newspaper.

Don Clark, who goes to Florida in the winter, tells his wife, "If I have to crawl on my knees, I want to die in Vermont."

Toad spends summer under log outside my front door; haunts lily bed in crook of house. Earth-colored for camouflage.

Chthonic = underworld. Mise-en-scène = putting on a play.

Lady Di's death: I'm reminded of seeing Marilyn Monroe's left breast fall out of her bodice in front of ten photographers in 1952, while posing on an elephant in Madison Square Garden; and they, in that politer era, lowered their cameras until she put it back. (Did glance at each other to be sure no one cheated.)

September 8: I find two newborn garter snakes near the chicken coop, under separate pieces of tin, as if they'd moved from birthplace or been distributed by mother in the lengthy birth process. In early moonlight I hear first few flying geese.

Rebarbative. Menhir. Innominate.

Em Hebard, the State Treasurer, shopping in Comstock's grocery store with his coupons and 5% Wednesday senior citizens' discount.

I go to dispersal auction of the Blodgett Farm, Mildred's in-laws, after death of mainstay son from sudden bone-marrow cancer, in his forties. Like any newcomer to Vermont, I once liked auctions; now I hate the hound-like baying, the scattering of a lifetime's possessions or quality milking herd. The stooped, white-haired father starts his beloved John Deere tractor so the crowd can see it run; luckily, his son Dave buys it for $8,100. Daughter-widow weeps when we all move from row of machinery for harrowing, raking, or chopping-blowing-baling hay or corn to blue and white tent over little bull pen where cattle are. Cattle, however, are described in auto terms: a "'94-model," year born; a "three-cylinder" if one teat doesn't work. Before the jolly chaffing of the auctioneers starts, they hold a moment of silence for the man who died. There is a supportive, elegiac mood to these auctions now, as farming becomes like writing essays, a vanishing, impractical, almost devotional way of life.

September 22: First day of autumn *and* first solid frost.

Foley says first man he killed was a sixteen-year-old North Korean ("on Good Friday"), stabbed with a knife. His worst night of war, he spent lying underneath a truck while North Korean patrol partied around him, cutting up three other Americans' bodies of his six-man patrol that had walked into an ambush while searching for Koreans to kill. He had rolled safely under the truck, but watched their boots moving around him and smelled the Lucky Strikes from the dead Americans that they were smoking. He had lost his helmet in the tumult of the firefight, but finally thought he located it and gripped it all the rest of the night close to his chest—only to discover at daylight, after the Koreans had left, that he was clutching the head of A. E. Smith, one of his buddies, which had been severed.

T. S. Eliot and Johnny Appleseed share the same birthday.

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Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Road Rage: the nineties.

Vaseline rubbed on a bump will keep it from bruising.

Namaste = Hindu verbal greeting, with tented hands. Labile = unstable. Florilegium = anthology.

November 8: Lovely bouncing red fox in the field, powerful presence.

Four beards on my refrigerator: Whitman, Berryman, Oppenheimer, and Abbey.

How crowded our lives are now, with electricity and central heating: no seasonal or hourly down time. Full speed ahead all year round, almost day and night.

Bog turtles are classified as "threatened," pairs worth $2,000 now, whereas painted turtles are still commonplace. In more personal era, Bog was known as Muhlenberg's turtle, red-bellied snakes were called Storer's snakes, and Blanding's turtles and Dekay's snakes were named for *those* scientists.

Stone flies beat their wings to communicate, as bees beat their wings.

Barrelhouse music was played in barrelhouses—joints with a keg out in the woods.

8,000 man-made objects presently in space, a tenth of them satellites (vs. other debris). Can be tracked by Defense Dept. if baseball-sized or up.

Bodacious. Vitrine. Aorist. Myoma. Sidereal.

Big statements like "Happy families are all alike" or "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" are exhilarating for the reader even if untrue.

Living in a Thoreau-look-alike cabin is taken to be evidence of Ted Kaczynski's mental illness.

Maintenance of one's teeth at 65! Whereas before, one brushed mostly to avoid bad breath, *now* one flosses, swishes Listerine and wears a tooth guard just to keep the damn things.

In mid-December a family of bluebirds (6) defends its nest box against a red squirrel on the tree by mobbing it around and around the trunk. It has come to search for ash seeds, but the box they crowd in overnight is what the bluebirds care about. Meanwhile, on another branch chickadees and downy woodpeckers congregate to eat suet from a holder, undisturbed by the bluebirds and indifferent to the red squirrel.

Foley says as a poor newsboy he once kidnapped a lady's cocker spaniel and then returned it at the end of the day for the $10 reward.

Says his own mother died while shouting at his brother from the kitchen while making potato salad. Brother stays out of the kitchen and seldom eats potato salad.

In Barton, in the cellar of the drugstore where the live bait is stored, a mink was trapped that had taken up residence, eating shiners out of the tank.

David Markson, on his 70th birthday, thanks me for calling and tells me he hopes (my 65th being the next day) that I "live as long as you want to."

So much suffering: I feel sorry for the calf that was hacked apart for veal chops, after a measly sunless life, and for the Christmas tree I water after it's been chopped down, and for the earthworm my pet turtle tears apart, and for the starving opossum under the bird feeder.

Scribner's father in a snowstorm, with Alzheimer's, said to "call that man who's putting all that snow on my field and tell him to get it the hell off there."

This strange age: I turn off Corigliano's *Red Violin* and put on alligator roars and frog songs. But ragtime most comforts me when I'm sad.

Thoreau walked all the way from Cambridge to Boston with a frozen toad in his pocket he'd found on the sidewalk, hoping it would thaw.

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· BOOKS ·

REREADING

Kipling,
Now and Then

NOEL PERRIN

The summer I was nineteen, I got a job as rodman on a government survey party in the Rocky Mountains. No skill required. My chief duty was to carry heavy equipment for the real surveyors.

But what about my chief entertainment? For me that was books. Still is. Warned that there would be few available in Crested Butte, Colorado, the tiny town that was to be our headquarters, I took the precaution of bringing a supply with me. Originally I picked about six. They were all classics, naturally; I was an intending English major.

But six proved to be too much weight—heavy equipment with a vengeance. It was June 1947 when I left my New York suburb and headed west. The age of the paperback had not yet begun. Six hulking hardbacks simply would not fit into my already overcrowded suitcases. In the end I boarded the New York-Chicago train with just two books weighing them down. One was the collection of Kipling stories called *The Day's Work*. The other was James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Kipling I picked because I had just that spring read *Kim* and been dazzled—as I had been dazzled at seven or eight by the *Just So Stories* and the *Jungle Books*, and at fourteen by *Stalky and Co.* I chose *The Day's Work* in particular because one of my cousins, an old married woman of twenty-three, had informed me that, among other delights, the book contained the most romantic love story ever written. What she really meant, of course, was the most romantic one she had ever read, but at nineteen I was not making such distinctions.

As for *Ulysses*, that was an easy choice. It was like being a mountaineer and deciding to have a crack at Everest. Well, no, not Everest; that would have been *Finnegans Wake*. Mont Blanc, perhaps. In any case, it was a very impressive book to be reading in 1947. Real familiarity with it, I understood, just about certified one as an intellectual.

For my purpose, the book had another prime virtue: It was 650 pages. Since my reading time would be limited to brief evenings after long days spent toiling up mountains with concrete corner posts, *Ulysses* might well last me for weeks.

As it turned out, it has lasted me much longer than that—fifty-one years so far. During that summer in Crested Butte I read the Kipling stories six or eight times each, having previously read them once on the Denver Zephyr, racing west from Chicago. (I had a deal with my parents: if I sat up all night on this shiny streamliner, instead of being princely in a sleeping car, I could keep half the money thus saved. This led to much extra reading time.) I also read the first seventy pages of *Ulysses*.

This was, of course, a different, almost a foreign era. When I got to Crested Butte, which is now a fancy resort town, I found that you could fish for trout from a small wooden bridge right in the center of what passed for downtown. The government allowance of four dollars a day for room and board sounds absurdly low in 1998; in fact it was ample. We got our rooms in what passed for a hotel, plus breakfast, dinner,

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and a packed lunch to take up the mountains, for three dollars a day. The extra dollar we could put in our pockets. And keep there. Unless you were a drinker (which no carrier of concrete corner posts should ever be), there was not a damn thing to do in Crested Butte. A different era.

It was also a different era in Western literature, and in the assumptions underlying it. For about 450 years Western literature had been saying, among other things, that live white males were the natural managers of the planet, the Prosperos, while natives everywhere were the Calibans. In 1947 it was beginning to tone this message down, but only just beginning. Here reality was ahead of literature. The great colonial empires—English, French, Dutch, Belgian, Portuguese—still existed, but they were shrinking. British India was in the blood-soaked process of splitting into two independent nations. On Bali and Java, natives were in even bloodier conflict with the Dutch. "Colonial" was beginning to be a bad word, except in American real estate offices.

Little as I knew at nineteen, I did know that Kipling held the Prospero view (though not the Caliban), and was thus a jingoist, a chauvinist, an imperialist. But I partly held the Prospero view myself. When I read *Kim,* it had troubled me not at all that white men were the natural managers of India. Besides, they weren't the only natural managers. The Lama, Hurree Babu, Mahbub Ali, and the old Ranee also directed events: three brown men and a brown woman. I think if you had asked me in 1947, I would readily have agreed that Kipling made too much of the white man's burden (which was also his glory), and even that he was the preacher of a creed outworn, or partially so. But then I would have pointed out that Shakespeare was, too.

As for Joyce, no message problems here. He was daring and avant-garde. He didn't espouse creeds, he mocked them, often with daring blasphemy. He was even said to be obscene. In fact, my third and hitherto unmentioned reason for picking *Ulysses* was the hope of finding some shockers. I took Kipling because I loved his work, and I took Joyce because I wanted to boast of having read him, with a possible bonus of finding something salacious. Unless you count a joke Buck Mulligan tells about an old woman possibly using the same pot to pee in and to make tea in, I found no trace in pages 1 through 70.

In 1998 it is still possible—and, of course, environmentally preferable—to take long-distance trains in the United States. Recently I took one from Vermont, where I now live, to Washington, D.C., and back. For reading, it amused me to bring along the same two books that I had lugged to Crested Butte fifty-one years earlier. Only this time they were much lighter. That's because they are both readily available as paperbacks. *The Day's Work* is part of a Penguin series called Twentieth-Century Classics. (It doesn't quite fit, since it actually came out in 1898.) *Ulysses* I had in the reverent and even awe-struck Vintage edition. It's printed with little numbers in the margin, as if it were a very long poem, or perhaps the Bible.

What happened? Well, the Vermonter had barely pulled out of White River Junction when I opened *The Day's Work* to the first of its twelve stories. The Vermonter is a beautiful train, sleek and fast, though of course with lesser food than the Zephyr had in 1947. The airlines have corrupted us all. But Kipling was undamaged. That first story is called "The Bridge-Builders," and it is a masterpiece. An imperialist masterpiece, to be sure, but one that rises far above such considerations.

As the story opens, you are on the site of a nearly completed bridge over the holy river Ganges. It is a mile and three-quarters long, and five thousand men have been working on it for three years. An English engineer named Findlayson designed the bridge and has directed its construction for all three years, working twelve- and fifteen-hour days. (*The Day's Work* is an apt title; Kipling celebrates work as few other writers ever have.)

Findlayson has one assistant, a young engineer named Hitchcock, and one Indian foreman whom he trusts, a former sailor named Peroo.

Right now the holy river is very low indeed—there's been a drought—and Findlayson expects to finish the central piers and open the bridge for traffic in about three months. Instead the rains come early and hard. Mother Gunga, as Peroo calls her, rises in angry flood,

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and there is a chance she will wash out the great bridge.

Kipling plays this story in many different ways. I didn't consciously think about them in 1947, but I surely do now. First there's the straight adventure story. When word comes of the flood racing down toward them, Findlayson, Hitchcock, and Peroo have somewhere between ten and fifteen hours to get ready. Will they save the bridge? Will they lose it? The tale is thrilling on that level alone. But it's the other levels that make it great, they and Kipling's lofty style.

On one level the bridge represents English control of India, and Mother Gunga, the Ganges, is India herself. The reason the story somewhat implausibly shows only two engineers directing so vast an operation is that it draws a parallel between that hard-working pair and the small number of English administrators who were managing all of India. The railroad tracks that are to go across the bridge are a miniature of the steel harness that by Kipling's time the British had laid all over India. And though Kipling makes no overt links, it might even be possible to liken the bridge-threatening flood to the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, when English control of India nearly ended.

On another level there's a theme that seems quite modern: the ambivalent relationship between the people who build bridges and dams and the like, and the natural forces they must subdue. Nearly a century before John McPhee wrote *The Control of Nature*, Kipling had many of the same ideas. Race is irrelevant here. Almost all the characters, Indian and British, attempt, simply because they are human, to put their stamp on nature. "Mother Gunga—in irons," says Peroo, who half wants her to break free even as he risks instant death by taking every possible step to prevent her from doing so.

And then there's a still deeper level, on which Kipling looks at nature to see if it really is sacred, as Hinduism asserts. At first you think no, it isn't. One strand of the story tells about the overweight priest that Peroo and his fellow caste members have brought to the site. He is a fat fraud, and speaks to no gods. At the end of the story, Peroo is planning to whip him out of the village.

But false priests and false gods do not mean there are no true priests or true gods. When Findlayson collapses in exhaustion as he strains to prepare for the flood, Peroo persuades him to take two opium pills. Presently he sees a vision, and that vision is a gathering of the gods of India. They come—naturally—in animal form: Hanuman as a vast gray ape, Shiva as a giant bull, Kali the destroyer as a great tigress, Mother Gunga as a crocodile. They are met to discuss both the future of the bridge and their own future as gods.

Mother Gunga wants the bridge destroyed, and Kali backs her. The others do not. "Let the dirt dig in the dirt ere it return to the dirt," says Ganesh the elephant god. He means that as the gods measure time, the bridge will be a temporary thing, too brief to care about. And of course he means that Findlayson, Hitchcock, Peroo, and the five thousand workers are only bits of animated dust. This is not your ordinary imperial outlook. Neither is Hanuman's observation that the gods of India can master the gods of Europe. "I took the woman [the Virgin Mary] and made her twelve-armed," says Hanuman. It is a wonderful, solemn, and, yes, awe-inspiring scene, this council.

Finally, there's the language. As a little boy in India, Kipling spoke Hindi before he spoke English. When he *had* to talk English—to his parents, for example—he "haltingly translated [from] the vernacular idiom that one thought and dreamed in." (I'm quoting his autobiography.) As a grown writer he still used vernacular idiom when it suited his purpose, only it wasn't halting. It was swift and sure translation into archaic English. I knew nothing about this in 1947. I just knew that when Findlayson says of young Hitchcock, "Cub thou wast, assistant thou art. Personal assistant, and at Simla, thou shalt be," it gave me a shiver of pleasure. Still does.

Back on the luxurious Vermonter, now nearing Bellows Falls, I turned eagerly to the second story, "A Walking Delegate." My eagerness lasted about two pages. Here there's a conference, too—of horses. There are nine in all, eight belonging to the southern Vermont farm where Kipling and his American wife lived from 1892 to 1896, and one town horse

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they are boarding. The town horse is the walking delegate. Of course it's a lively discussion, and quite believably horsey. But something I completely missed in 1947 now glared out at me. These horses are actually human beings wearing horsehides: eight honest rural workers and one urban agitator, who is trying to promote a union and a strike. The agitator, a strikingly ugly horse from Kansas, has a couple of valid points to make about Man the Oppressor, but Kipling never allows him to make them effectively. He is too busy having the other horses kick Kansas systematically around the pasture. Loaded dice. Unfair.

The third story is much better. It personifies a piece of machinery, something Kipling does better than anyone else I know. "The Ship That Found Herself" is about the creation of the consciousness of a new twelve-hundred-ton freighter, just built in a Scottish shipyard. Originally each part of the ship, right down to the rivets, had its own consciousness; at the end all of the parts come together to form the ship's mind. Like the seventh story, in which the characters are all American steam locomotives, it's a kind of mechanical bildungsroman. By learning how to cooperate, the ship and the locomotives learn how to take their places in the daily work that keeps the world going. Neither is quite so good as "The Bridge-Builders"; both are worth the numerous readings they got in 1947, and now that I've come back to them in 1998, I may just read them again in 2010, or even sooner.

There are twelve stories in *The Day's Work*. I liked them all back then. Nine pass muster now. "The Walking Delegate," as I've mentioned, is a failure, though not an abysmal one. Two stories are simply dreadful. In both of them Kipling is venting his spleen about Americans in England. He thinks he has wrapped his pettishness in enough comedy to make it palatable, and for me in 1947 I guess he did. Not now.

"The Maltese Cat," on the other hand, in which all but one of the important characters are polo ponies, is wonderful. So is "William the Conqueror," William being a twenty-two-year-old English girl in India. That's both a love story, though not the one my cousin had in mind, and a funny-sad-serious-heroic account of two Prosperos trying to save starving babies during one of the famines that used to occur regularly in India. The one my cousin had in mind is called "The Brushwood Boy," and it surely has a romantic plot. From the time the hero was a little boy, nearly all of his dreams have taken him to a remote and dangerous country. He sometimes has a companion, a little dark-haired girl. What he doesn't know until he is an officer home on leave from India is that the little girl, now a grown woman, has had all the dreams, too, and that they are destined to meet and almost at once to marry. The story still has power over me, but nothing like what it did when I was a destiny-seeking teenager. Despite my cousin's number one rating, I'm afraid it's not even in the top ten of romantic love stories, not up there with Marie and Emil in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* or Pellegrina Leoni and Lincoln Forsner in Isak Dinesen's "The Dreamers," or Tristram and Yseult.

About the time the train reached Trenton, New Jersey, I finished *The Day's Work* and sat looking out the window for a while. Then I picked up *Ulysses*.

Did that keep me happily occupied until Washington? Well, no. I stopped after twenty-five pages. I had had an illumination. *Ulysses* shouldn't be printed at all. It should be recited, as the *Odyssey* itself was. The people at Vintage who numbered it like a poem were onto something. Only they didn't go far enough. They should have recorded it on cassette. They should further have made sure that the reader had a good Irish accent; a tireless love of wordplay, both deep and puerile; and a fondness for mild scatology. Had such a tape been available in 1947, I would have listened all the way through at least once, maybe more.

But for reading I'll still take Kipling.

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Biographer: Get a Life!

STEVEN G. KELLMAN

YOU ARE NOT I: A PORTRAIT OF PAUL BOWLES
By Millicent Dillon. University of California Press. $27.50.

OUT OF SHEER RAGE: WRESTLING WITH D. H. LAWRENCE
By Geoff Dyer. North Point Press. $23.

"You have but two subjects," growled Samuel Johnson at James Boswell, "yourself and me. I am sick of both." The first great modern biography, Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson* reveals as much about its author as about its subject, and readers sick of both Johnson and Boswell are sick of life.

A human interest in the lives of others sustains the health of the publishing industry. Abraham Lincoln alone has sold enough books to put a smile on every copper penny he has fronted. Books about the lives of saints (and sinners) are endlessly fascinating, not so much because of the lives but because of the books—because, bound and stitched, experience is endowed with a shape and weight not found in life. Packaged with tidy beginnings, middles, and ends, the biographies, memoirs, and autobiographies of actors, athletes, politicians, royals, and tycoons that populate the best-seller lists are written and consumed in blithe disregard of Virginia Woolf's discovery that "in or about December, 1910, human character changed." In fact, last year, in a biography that filled 893 pages (98 of them endnotes), Hermione Lee supplied Woolf herself with a solidity and continuity that the innovative novelist withheld from her own fictional creations. Readers of popular lives continue to turn pages with undiminished faith in the integrity of the essential self. And scholars continue to amass and arrange information undeterred by the taint of subjectivity. Most life-writing throughout the century has ignored the Gnostic revelation, from Marcel Proust and Franz Kafka, that character is fluid and elusive—that the quest to know another is always sabotaged by the slipperiness of the other and the clumsiness of the quester.

In Jean-Paul Sartre's first novel, *Nausea* (1938), Antoine Roquentin spends three abstemious years researching the life of the obscure nineteenth-century Marquis de Rollebon. His problem is not a dearth of data. "On the contrary," he complains, "I almost have too much of them. What is missing in all this testimony is stability, consistency." Abandoning his biographical project, Roquentin resolves at the end to compose a novel, probably one that, precisely because of its stability and consistency, no modernist would write.

But design is deadly in nonfiction; we murder to biographize. In Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), Charles Kinbote quite likely kills John Shade, the poet whose life he appropriates as subject for his prose, and Nabokov's biographical fiction *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941) concedes that no real life is ever captured—real or alive—in a book. Even after the death of Orson Welles's Charles Foster Kane, "Rosebud" frustrates Jerry Thompson, the magazine reporter, in his attempt to assemble all the pieces of the enigmatic tycoon's jigsaw puzzle. "I don't think any word can explain a man's life," concludes Thompson.

That a person's life cannot be reduced to any word—or, rather, to any words, even several hundred thousand of them—is the burden of much recent biography. Acknowledging the impossibility of life-writing, several metabiographies have adopted the futility of the bio-

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graphical project as their very theme. In 1934, frustrated in his efforts to track down the *echt* Frederick Rolfe—the late-Victorian eccentric known as Baron Corvo—A. J. A. Symons produced *The Quest for Corvo,* a book that is as much about his unsuccessful venture as it is about its subject; the subtitle, *An Experiment in Biography,* foregrounds the book's failure. In 1988, after a court injunction denied Ian Hamilton use of unpublished texts by the Greta Garbo of American novelists, he changed the title of his work in progress—which is largely about why the work made so *little* progress—from *J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life* to *In Search of J. D. Salinger.* In 1983, when Maximilian Schell attempted to make a documentary about Marlene Dietrich, the octogenarian actress refused to cooperate. "I've been photographed to death," she tells Schell, through the door she slammed in his face. *Marlene* is an obstructed documentary, a film that records its director's failure to catch his subject on camera and in film. "The truth about Marlene will not be found," Schell confesses, echoing the exasperation common to many recent metabiographers, for whom the definite article in the title of Boswell's portrait of Johnson is hopelessly naïve.

When, for example, Millicent Dillon attempts to write about Paul Bowles, she concludes that the expatriate author and composer is "a man who abhorred directness" and "a master of opacity." In 1977, Dillon traveled to Tangier to gather material for *A Little Original Sin: The Life and Work of Jane Bowles.* She was intrigued—and eventually haunted ("to be a biographer," she explains, "meant that I was in the grip of an obsession")—enough by her subject's widower to decide, in 1991, that she had to write a book on Paul Bowles as well. She returned to Morocco several times over the years, and in daily interviews lasting four or five hours each, she attempted to pry out of Bowles enough information for a coherent biography. "I don't exist," the genial sage explained to his flustered interrogator. Dillon's task was further complicated by the fact that she was a stranger to North Africa and that Bowles was almost always surrounded by a coterie of bizarre characters. Increasingly, Dillon begins to doubt even the presumptions that had made possible her book on Jane Bowles.

Multiple versions of a life testify to the truth that none can ever be definitive. And while many biographers are obliged to find some space for themselves not already occupied by previous writers, Dillon not only has to contend with Bowles's own 1972 autobiography, *Without Stopping,* and with previous books on Bowles by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, Michelle Green, and Gena Dagel Caponi, but she is also forced, during her last visit to Tangier, to share the company of Bowles with a rival biographer, Virginia Spencer Carr. The result, *You Are Not I: A Portrait of Paul Bowles,* which derives its title from a Bowles story, is more "a meditation on the nature of biography" than the sort of confident accounting she made of Jane Bowles. By the final pages of *You Are Not I,* even though we have heard a great deal about how she came to know Paul Bowles, she confesses that she understands her subject less than ever: "He has escaped me."

"On the trail of another man," declared Paul Murray Kendall, biographer of Richard III and Louis XI, "the biographer must put up with finding himself at every turn; any biography uneasily shelters an autobiography within it." In *You Are Not I,* the You and I contend for primacy, as Dillon, who remarks on her own striking resemblance to Jane Bowles, eclipses Jane's husband, Paul, as the subject of the book. In the introduction to the fifth and final volume of his monumental life of Henry James, Leon Edel conceded that "a biographer has his own life to lead as well as the life of his subject." Yet nowhere in his minute delineation of James's days and works does the biographer provide any overt details of his own. By contrast, Dillon provides enough particulars about herself—she is a divorced Jewish mother of two who lives in San Francisco, writes fiction, and is fourteen years younger than Bowles—and about her experiences trying to track her literary prey that, like an Escher optical puzzle, *You Are Not I* is forever sliding back and forth between biography and autobiography.

By contrast, Geoff Dyer's *Out of Sheer Rage* is a categorical tease and a manic meditation on the nature of biography and on human nature, blithely razzing readers who seek a conventional reconstruction of the life of D. H. Lawrence. Dyer derives his title from comments

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Lawrence made about a book he wrote on Thomas Hardy in 1936: "Out of sheer rage I've begun my book on Thomas Hardy. It will be about anything but Thomas Hardy I am afraid—queer stuff—but not bad." In *Thomas Hardy,* Lawrence strays far from the madding crowd of sober Hardy scholars, and Dyer's *Out of Sheer Rage* is most Laurentian when most tendentious. Dyer's subtitle promises that he will be *Wrestling with D. H. Lawrence,* but neither is pinned.

Dyer explains that he intended to produce "a sober academic study of D. H. Lawrence" as homage to the writer who inspired him to write. But *Out of Sheer Rage* is to a sober academic study what Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is to a scholarly treatise on the tourist and convention industry in Nevada. Dyer's petulant persona expresses fear and loathing for academic writing ("it kills everything it touches"), as well as for much else, including seafood, children, and Greeks. About the illustrious university town in which he perversely chooses to reside, Dyer rants that "Oxford has the highest concentration of dull-witted, stupid, narrow-minded people anywhere in the British Isles." Eastwood, Lawrence's birthplace, "is an ugly little town in an ugly little county," and about his New Mexican resting place, Dyer declares, "There were more terrible artists living in Taos than anywhere else on earth." Other locations that the author visits, sometimes in a desultory effort to retrace Lawrence's footsteps, include Paris, Rome, Greece, Taormina, and Oaxaca.

The question of where to live perplexes Dyer, but the question of *how* to live animates his prose, which is less about Lawrence than about Dyer, and less about either than about living life deliberately. *Out of Sheer Rage* bears a family resemblance to other deflected biographies, including *Saul Bellow, Drumlin Woodchuck,* Mark Harris's comic account of his anxious attempts to befriend and biographize Saul Bellow, and *U and I: A True Story,* Nicholson Baker's record of his obsession with John Updike. But in its passions and piques, Dyer's volume of impertinencies—which "*aspires* to the condition of notes" because, he explains, "Lawrence's prose is at its best when it comes closest to notes"—is more faithful to the Laurentian spirit than a methodical report on the novelist's life could ever have been.

In analogy with Stanislavskyan actors' immersion in their stage roles, Dyer coins the term "method criticism" to describe his manner of conjuring up Lawrence. He admits, even boasts, that he has not read all of Lawrence's novels and has no desire to reread those he has—not merely because he much prefers the letters and the nonfictional *Sea and Sardinia, Studies in Classic American Literature,* and *Twilight in Italy.* In his passionate irascibility, the itinerant Dyer aspires not merely to study Lawrence but to stimulate him. *Out of Sheer Rage* is worthy of its subject precisely because it is so sassy.

Ultimately, though, the target of this bittersweet mock-biography that mocks both biographer and biographee is something even larger than D. H. Lawrence. In its final pages, Dyer confides that "the real subject of this book, the one that writing it was an attempt to evade, is despair." Beneath the frantic bluster is utter despondency. Suffering from severe depression, from what he calls "this rheumatism of the will, this inability to see anything through," Dyer sees his Lawrence project as a reason and a means to keep living. And like the Sisyphus of Albert Camus, whom Dyer seems to admire as much as he does Lawrence, each of us must push a boulder, take up cheerfully a pointless task that reconciles us to the absurd. "One way or another we all have to write our studies of D. H. Lawrence," writes Dyer at the end of his book. "Even if they will never be published, even if we will never complete them, even if all we are left with after years and years of effort is an unfinished, unfinishable record of how we failed to live up to our own earlier ambitions, still we all have to try to make some progress with our books about D. H. Lawrence."

"The intellect of man is forced to choose," wrote Yeats, "Perfection of the life, or of the work." In truth, neither is possible. The lessons of the masters, of those who write or pose for biography, is that life-writing is as flawed as life, but just as compelling.

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A Dream of Reason

CONSILIENCE:
THE UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE
By Edward O. Wilson. Alfred A. Knopf. $26.

Reviewed by D. GRAHAM BURNETT

Isaiah Berlin, cribbing from Archilochus, once suggested that thinking persons might be sorted into two categories: foxes and hedgehogs. "The fox knows many things," wrote the elliptical Greek poet, "but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Glossed by Berlin, this hermetic fragment gave rise to an arcane (if erudite) parlor game: Goethe? fox; Montaigne? fox; Plato? hedgehog; Hegel? hedgehog. Who had one big idea, a unitary, all-encompassing vision? Whose thinking, by contrast, spun outward in centrifugal delight, seizing on variety, embracing profusion?

E. O. Wilson, by these lights, is one foxy hedgehog. Not only does his double identity—mild-mannered naturalist/collector/taxonomist cum contested synthesizer of the sweeping theories of sociobiology—seem to span the veritable poles of foxdom and hedgehogitude, his new book offers the reader both a little of everything and a theory of everything. Here you will find a critique of rational choice theory in economics, a discussion of Shipibo shamanism, and a brief history of the eighteenth century (with particular attention to the Marquis de Condorcet). This is a bold book for a man, nearly seventy, who could, should you express interest in something a little less speculative, show you a few of his five thousand detailed drawings of ants, soon to appear in his synthetic myrmecological monograph on the Western Hemisphere.

While *Consilience*'s eclectic content suggests the meanderings of a fox, the title reveals a hedgehog's presiding spirit: Wilson's subject is more than the mere unity of the sciences, it is the unity of all forms of human knowledge, their imminent "jumping together" or consilience. Decrying academic specialization, intellectual fragmentation, and particularly the mincing epistemological anxieties of poststructuralists, postmodernists, and their irresolute kin, Wilson invokes the optimistic rationalism of the Enlightenment as he declares science—Western if you like, reductivist if you insist—the most promising way forward on the fundamental questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where should we go? That these kinds of questions have long belonged to other modes of inquiry—philosophy, the arts, the humanities—Wilson grants, but his message in its most robust form declares that some of these enterprises, most notably their modern incarnations, have forfeited their mandate. The others will be leavened by science even if, in the end, they do not come within science's expanding scope.

"Science offers the boldest metaphysics of the age," Wilson declares in his opening. But make no mistake. This is not merely a resurrection of the sort of triumphalist account of science (and its obligation to help straighten out social life) which, despite a long lineage—from the volumes of the ambitious Auguste Comte to C. H. Waddington's angry little book *The Scientific Attitude* and its denunciations of the "harlot humanities"—has fallen from favor of late and is not much seen. True, one finds here an unapologetic scientism, substantiated by popular science vignettes showing the investigations of mind and behavior at their most powerful. True, too, that a set of familiar metaphors do their turn sketching the heroic character of scientists and their work: they are intrepid explorers of modern *terra incognita*, "confident enough to sail for blue water"; they cast light into the troglodytic realms of folk understanding; they are dogged as middle-earth prospectors, yet possess the poet's spirit. True again that much of the portrait—particularly the presentation of scientists' constitutional inability to defer to protestations of impossibility, and their "proprietary sense of the future"—will be familiar to those who recall a brush with C. P. Snow's 1959 book *The Two Cultures* (a text Wilson cites approvingly).

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Yet for all this (or perhaps because of it), *Consilience* is a book that merits close attention. Wilson's posture will alienate many. But if the humanistically inclined put down *Consilience* after reaching page 12 ("Philosophy, the contemplation of the unknown, is a shrinking dominion. We have the common goal of turning as much philosophy as possible into science"), it will be very unfortunate indeed. Triumphalism aside, be assured that *Consilience* presses directly to the heart of some of the most important issues facing us as culture-bearing units and unities. It drops the gauntlet—affably, without rancor—before the humanities, and in so doing offers its practitioners and admirers an opportunity to answer clearly, in their own voices, Wilson's vital question: "What is the relationship between science and the humanities, and how important is it for human welfare?"

Of his book (and, one presumes, his answer to this very question) Wilson has claimed: "I expect a lot of opposition. If I do not get it then I've failed." If this is so, then he can claim success with this reader. I disagree deeply with his central contention, as well as with much of the history he uses to ground his claims. This raises an interesting problem: Would the best reply to Wilson take issue piecemeal with each bit of his fox-like story, or should it burrow in on the prickly hedgehog hunkered down in the middle?

A fox's critique might ask, among other things: Can the religiosity of Descartes plausibly be called a mere "concession to metaphysics"? Can a pristine rationalist Enlightenment be so cleanly distinguished from the "absurd digressions and speculations" indulged in by its (to Wilson's mind) episodically wayward practitioners? What precisely do we learn of Goethe when we are told he lacked "what is today called the scientist's instinct"? How can the nineteenth century be presented as a temporary setback for the Enlightenment spirit (a lapse precipitated by the irrationalist excesses of the Romantics), when the same century saw the most fantastic burst of industrialization? Tracing so tidy a genealogy for the spirit of science as Wilson attempts calls for some foxy history indeed.

But such quibbling may seem pedantic when engaging a book that calls for nothing less than a profound rethinking of the nature of politics, ethics, religion, the arts, all the social sciences, and the humanities too. The temptation to dismiss Wilson's analysis of these many fields must be resisted, for while one might easily argue that he betrays some very odd ideas about their respective characters, to say no more would be to miss that (taken seriously) he is calling for these enterprises to become something radically different; to become, in effect, part of a whole called "science."

What then of the hedgehog in *Consilience?* It speaks thus: "No compelling reason has ever been offered why the same strategy [the construction of coherent cause-and-effect explanations across levels of organization] should not work to unite the natural sciences with the social sciences and humanities." Wilson wants us to move ahead on the hypothesis that such unity is both possible and felicitous. In evaluating this argument, much hinges on the precise nature of the "uniting" envisioned. Here *Consilience* never flat out states its case, and the very term "consilience" helps. Borrowed from the writings of William Whewell (the early Victorian master of Trinity College, Cambridge; best known for coining the term "scientist"), the word seems to wander in Wilson's usage from implying "reduction to" to something much milder—say, "consistence with."

This oscillation accounts for the irenical tone of some passages in the book—for instance where we are told, reasonably enough to my mind, that "there is a biologically based human nature, and it is relevant to ethics." But these sorts of collaborative passages must be juxtaposed with irruptions of what might be called high church oozism (it all goes back to the primordial ooze!), exemplified by Wilson's reflections on spiritual revelation and the prayers of mystics like St. Teresa of Avila: "Perhaps, as I believe, it can all eventually be explained as brain chemistry and deep, genetic history." This perspective gives rise to considerably edgier accounts of the relationship between the natural sciences and other modes of knowing. Perhaps what is wanted is not quite constructive dialogue, but rather *lebensraum* for a science rampant.

Here one encounters the tragedy of *Consilience.* At its shining moments, the book offers a challenging call to recognize the profound

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ways that behavioral genetics and human evolutionary scenarios will (continue to) change just who we think we are. Unfortunately, Wilson has harnessed this visionary material to a distressingly flat account of disciplines and their boundaries. He has said that the humanities (and kin) may be able to become *part of science,* rather than that all forms of human inquiry (science included) will come to look very different indeed. Here the friendly overtures will not help. Consilience is not a doctrine of conciliation.

There can be no disputing that Wilson takes toward philosophy a position of extreme hostility. He declares that "its involuted exercises and professional timidity have left modern culture bankrupt of meaning." It could be argued that Nietzsche—not timid—offers quite a coherent account of what a man is to do with a world (like Wilson's) composed, for all intents and purposes, of matter in motion. But one gets the clear sense that Wilson would be unwilling to concede that his beloved "will to truth" inevitably undoes itself (or, for that matter, that it is itself the last fruits of religious foolishness, as Nietzsche suggests). Fair enough; Wilson need not like Nietzsche. But where the philosophical aversions of *Consilience* cause politics to be treated like something the cat brought in, there is reason for concern.

For Wilson, the social sciences are suffering from a case of arrested scientific development. They are stuck in the "natural history" phase of a science—happily naming things, furiously organizing tables, but sadly lacking in theory. The cause? A "problem endemic to the social sciences: political ideology." Wilson seems to conceive of politics as an inhibiting matrix, a molasses-like impediment to brisk thinking and good decision making. For all its optimism, this is an unsound perspective. As the sage Lionel Trilling pointed out in his response to C. P. Snow in 1962: "We dream of Reason taking over the whole management of the world, and soon. No doubt a beneficent eventuality, but our impatience for it is dangerous if it leads us to deny the actuality of politics in the present."

Amen. Wilson considers Rousseau and the

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French Revolution the death of the Enlightenment, but theirs too, as Burke was quick to note, was a dream of reason. While one gets the sense that Wilson has worked hard to give his strong program of human sociobiology a new holistic spirit (a sort of kinder, gentler determinism), his remains a dream of unity based on matter in motion, explicable by fundamental laws. The full implications should stagger a careful reader. *Consilience* is a dream of unity that, like all others, has strict rules governing the units.

Let us turn, then, to the dark underbelly of the hedgehog. At issue is nothing less than the endlessly contentious question of how to bound the explanatory mechanisms of each mode of human knowing. For a moment, leave aside the evidence and plausibility of Wilson's claim; measure it by its telos. What world does *Consilience* promise? A world confident in singular explanations, a world where every question has a unique (if very complex) answer. Wilson claims this will work itself out democratically, but I see little reason to think so. Dreams of reason have found executors very quickly; they have seldom been savory fellows. Julien Benda, the grim great-granddaddy of all the conservative denunciators who rail against the (liberal academic) intelligentsia, was certainly no flighty irrationalist, yet he flinched in 1927 before the implications of the scientism he saw around him: "The dogma that history is obedient to scientific laws is preached by persons of arbitrary authority. This is quite natural, since it eliminates the two realities they most hate, i.e., human liberty and the historical action of the individual." A decade later these words would seem prescient indeed.

Wilson is by no means naïve to such things. He raises the specter of the Terror himself, and his homey, unpretentious style signals simplicity of expression, not simplicity of thought. If he has defended an empirically accessible human nature, and the promise of a newly coherent and universal intellectual project (with ethical and political arms), it is not because he has not heard the objections, but rather because he has sensed the need for some common ground in a world bent on particularism. His song of science is a paean, but also a plea to young would-be scientists; the encomiums on scientific method and its attainments must be read as such. *Consilience* is thus an intervention, an attempt to work change in a real, muddy world of multiculturalism and social construction, an intervention aimed at steering things right (or merely more *rightly*). While science is its subject, it is not, in sum, without an ideology of its own.

For all that, Wilson feels like a *liberal* man. Like C. P. Snow before him, he communicates an ample spirit; he reveals himself as a lover of the world and its denizens. (Not for nothing did he title his most personal book *Biophilia.*) Like Snow too, Wilson draws deeply from the well of his sympathetic humanism in concluding his ruminations on the sciences and the humanities. For both authors the urgency of this matter was heightened by an impending crisis: for Snow, the pressing need to industrialize the third world; for Wilson, impending ecological collapse. To point out that imminent crisis has often been the fulcrum of illiberality would be unkind; to point out that both authors see the expansion of their esteemed science as a solution to the crisis they themselves foretell would not be wrong. The irony, of course, is that Snow's solution was, memorably, "jam" for the poor. The huddled masses of the Southern Hemisphere were to receive from the hands of science the power systems, the agricultural revolutions, and ultimately all the stuff of the rich. It was a noble aim in 1959. Now Wilson, with the same depth of spirit, the same earnest exhortation, calls on science *not* in the name of jam, but in the name of unjamming ourselves from the ecological disaster the jamming brought with it. How quickly they change, these dreams of reason, even the best of them.

This might sound snide, but I do not intend it that way. Who could want to stand idly by while people starve or the world becomes unlivable? It is the urgency and above all the complexity of such matters that make Wilson's challenge so important. The crucial issues do indeed span our divided disciplines. For this reason Wilson has posed the right question: What *is* the relationship between the sciences (I prefer the plural) and the humanities? Wilson sees no compelling reason not to believe they could be one. I, like many humanists, and probably like plenty of scientists too, believe

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myself possessed of several such compelling reasons; it would be a privilege to try them on him some time. More important, it would behoove all scholars and thinking persons to ready their own reasons, humanists in particular. For despite all Wilson's curious rhetoric of science "sequestered" in America, and his sense of a two-pronged assault of anti-science forces—from below (cults and mysticism) and above (the Pyrrhonian minions of Bruno Latour)—science is doing just fine, thank you. A glimpse at budgets, hiring, stipends, and institutional priorities should set that matter to rest. One wonders what one of Wilson's scientists, fretting at being undervalued, would make of being thrust into the shabby shoes of a humanist, who certainly has good reason to feel beleaguered as she casts an eye at the profile of higher education in America. That we should all feel marginalized raises a curious question: Just what has come to lie at the center of these institutions of liberal learning? Could it be all those undergraduate business majors?

And it is here, finally, that these abstract debates over the lineaments of knowledge become truly interesting. For the issue at stake in *Consilience*, like that in *The Two Cultures*, is ultimately nothing less than what we need to know to live with ourselves and with each other. This cannot be anything but a pedagogical question, a question about the curriculum, a question about the nature of a liberal education. It is in debating these questions that we maintain the conditions of possibility for a free society. *Consilience* deserves to be engaged—answered—with this in mind.

A tablet now plucks the cords of our nether members, for the better, I am told; those that pluck at the higher faculties are not far off. What will we say to a drug that stiffens the intellect, focuses the powers of concentration, for a price? We will want to be in full possession of our humanity to make wise decisions about such things. Oddly, we have never had that humanity more firmly in hand, nor have we been more completely confused about what it works out to be. With Wilson's suggestion that the ships of religion and philosophy are to be "left scuttled and burning" on this new shore, I cannot agree. They got us here, and I suspect that I, for one, may wish to leave.

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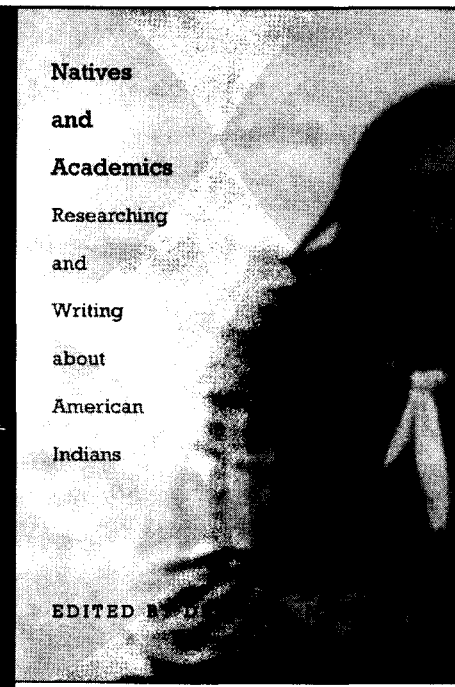

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History as Fiction, Fiction as History

A Thread of Years
By John Lukacs. Yale University Press. $30.

Reviewed by EUGEN WEBER

In 1918, the Westminster Kennel Club excludes dachshunds from its annual dog show in Madison Square Garden; in 1924, German shepherds are the favorite dogs shown, outnumbering French poodles. That same year, abetted by the dollar's strength, a young American couple travel to Brescia to pick up an elegant touring car, and are impressed by the modernity of Mussolini's Italy. Ten years later, Cole Porter's sunny "You're the Top!" testifies to the dictator's enduring popularity: "You're the top! You're the great Houdini! You're the top! You are Mussolini!" That same year, 1934, English and Americans summering in Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber sip Rhine wine and exchange impressions about the cheerful, happy Germans, so preferable to the French. In 1939, under the impact of the German-Soviet pact, "Isms turn to Wasms," and Americans begin to reconsider isolationism and to take sides.

Every event, John Lukacs argues, is a historical event, but some are more historical than others: not necessarily important, but revealing. Each of this book's brief chapters is devoted to one year between 1901 and 1969; each begins with a fictional incident and continues with a discussion; and each stresses the connection between private and public experience, demonstrating the part *story* plays in history.

In every other historian's breast there beats the heart of a novelist. After many years of distinguished historical writing, Lukacs has decided to indulge his heart and write a book that is part history, part fiction. Word painting predominates: no bad thing, but disconcerting when, as sometimes happens, it catches the reader off guard. Lukacs declares that his book is not a novel and not history either: "not *history* but *about* history." This sometimes means that he runs on rather about history, which is less interesting to talk about than to do; but also that his narrative is meant to carry us past the part parables into their times—a cunning trick, and generally effective.

Lukacs defines himself as a reactionary impressionist. Yet where impressionists neglected detail for overall effect, the author's impressionism enlists it to achieve a more encompassing vision. That makes him more of a pointillist, leaving the dots of his stories to blend in the reader's reflections. He is certainly a reactionary in an elegiac sort of way; he identifies his theme as "the decline of a particular civilization [ours], and the decline of the ideal of the gentleman." *Civilization* is used here in preference to *culture,* a word too easily associated either with pedantry or with multiculturalism; *civilization,* by contrast, more clearly indicates a highly developed state of society, an orderly community associated with civility, hence with degrees of gentleness, gentlemanliness, manners, and appropriate behavior.

Lukacs knows Philadelphia well, and Philadelphians figure prominently in his pages, including or along with Quakers, Catholics, English, Irish, and, naturally, Hungarians. But men of honor and of probity, that dying breed, are his special quarry. With nostalgic respect, Lukacs records their decency and their antiquated ideas about human progress, he grieves over their pulverized principles, he traces their erosion and their crumbling. I am not sure myself that gentlemen were ever quite so gentlemanly as he would have them be. But Lukacs loves his Philadelphia tribes; and even if memory exaggerates or betrays, his affectionate portraits of American gentlefolk are warming.

As the narrative reaches mid-century, the book grows darker. Decline accelerates and Fall draws nigh. In the 1950s, nouveaux nouveaux riches, beginning to replace decently conformist parvenus, learn to support the arts less for social considerations than for tax advantages. "Art" falls apart, "society" cannot hold, the bourgeois age creaks toward crooked closure. So, too,

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does hoary bibliocracy. By 1964, "reviews had become more important than books," and "reviews are what academics and intellectuals most like to read." Reading the chapter devoted to 1965, one sighs with envy as Lukacs describes heady times for American universities—and even American restaurants. "The food is rich," he notes, evoking still more sighs, at least from this reviewer. By 1966, "intellectual dishonesty is all around us now." Okay, but did not Flaubert think so too?

And what about Dr. Johnson, whom Lukacs himself quotes: "Knowledge without integrity is a dreadful thing"?

Like many others, this thoughtful Catholic is impressed by the surge of "purposeless evil, youthful evil," depressed by "the erosion of beliefs and institutions and of manners and morals and habits that can no longer be restored." Is it that *vieillir, c'est mourir un peu?* Or does this insidious wistfulness refer to real ruins lying all around? Especially in academe, where we offer urban studies but no urbanity, surveys of civilization but small civility, multiculturalism and little culture. Like Eric Hobsbawm, but from the opposite end of the political spectrum, Lukacs has produced a testament of disillusion that should appeal to older folk with particular force, but to others as well.

His text is sprinkled with canny perceptions: the sadness of unvisited American cemeteries, the differences between England and Europe, the pitfalls of national self-determination. His *kleine Nachtmusik* of small-scale histories and tiny tales, both teeming with insights and comments and suggestions, is dotted with pithy essays that situate his *petites histoires* within the *grande histoire.* Chatty, allusive, rambling, and digressive, the book is eminently readable; and well worth reading, especially if one hails from Pennsylvania or from Central Europe. Its immensely literate author might, however, remember A. E. Housman's advice:

> The troubles of our proud and angry dust
> Are from eternity, and shall not fail.
> Bear them we can, and if we can we must.
> Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.

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The Poet's Inquest

BIRTHDAY LETTERS
By Ted Hughes. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $20.

Reviewed by CAROLYNE WRIGHT

Just when every literary critic and Sylvia Plath devotee thought that she had sorted out the truth about Plath and her husband, Ted Hughes, along came *Birthday Letters,* a remarkable sequence of love poems by Hughes about his tumultuous seven-year marriage. With over one hundred thousand copies in print, *Birthday Letters* will almost certainly be the best-selling poetry book of 1998. Thirty-five years after his wife laid her head in a gas oven, Hughes, who has been Britain's Poet Laureate since 1984, abruptly broke his unrelenting and controversial silence about his life with Plath. Nobody, it seemed, had any idea that over the last three decades he had been quietly composing this poetic memoir, a book that casts new light on one of the most studied, and hotly contested, of modern relationships.

The early poems capture the shabby, high-spirited student life of mid-1950s Cambridge, to which Hughes, a penniless recent graduate, makes frequent weekend trips from London to visit old college chums. At first he is bemused by the "flaring gestures" and "misfit self-display" of Plath, an ambitious American Fulbright scholar who has energetically made a place for herself in the male-dominated university poetry scene. He falls under her spell at a raucous 1956 student literary party ("St. Botolph's"): "your eyes / . . . a crush of diamonds / . . . bright as a crush of tears / That might have been tears of joy."

Finding himself alone in a corner with her, Hughes forcefully kisses the blonde American; delighted but determined to top him, Plath bites his cheek so hard she leaves a "swelling ring-moat of tooth-marks / That was to brand my face for the next month."

In their next meeting, arranged by a mutual friend, they spend an ecstatic night together in Hughes's dingy London flat, and, as he recalls in "18 Rugby Street," Hughes begins to glimpse the darker psychic traits of this "great bird" of a young woman, who "surged in the plumage of your excitement, / Raving exhilaration." That same evening, Plath reveals that, a few years earlier, she had tried to kill herself. For the bedazzled Hughes, about to throw in his emotional lot with this brilliant stranger, it is as if the new lovers "went in a barrel together / Over some Niagara." His intuition gives him an unmistakable danger signal: "As if a sober star had whispered it / Above the revolving, rumbling city: stay clear." But he ignores the warning for the wonder: "You were a new world. My new world. / So this is America, I marvelled. / Beautiful, beautiful America!"

A headlong marriage follows, on Bloomsday, 1956; the discomfiting Iberian honeymoon is recreated in "You Hated Spain" ("Spain frightened you. Spain / Where I felt at home"), a harbinger of the deep-set cultural and temperamental differences that begin to surface between the two poets. The poems continue to trace the progress of their lives together: their return to England for a halcyon period as newlyweds ("the life that might have bonded us / Into a single animal, a single soul") while Plath completes her Fulbright term; a two-year stay in America, where they travel, write, take up college teaching posts, and then resign to devote themselves full-time to poetry; and the final return to England, where the couple's two children are born in quick succession, their marital troubles deepen, Plath's behavior grows increasingly irrational and violent, Hughes departs (or is thrown out) and joins another woman—all of this culminating with Plath's suicide, in London, on February 11, 1963, at the age of thirty. These events take place in less than eight years of incandescent intensity, burned forever into the memory of the survivor.

For these are poems of memory—narrative, journal-like—the work of a mature poet who has lost none of his early energy, but who allows a certain unevenness in their prosody. The originality of these poems resides in their

Carolyne Wright, the author of five books of poems, a collection of essays, and two volumes of translations of Bengali women poets, is currently the Visiting Poet at Emory University.

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particularized, often mundane, biographical details. Sketching in Spain, planting daffodils, or braiding a rag rug in Devon, Plath appears to achieve peace of mind while working with her hands ("Drawing calmed you"), and Hughes portrays both of them—ironically enough for artists whose medium is language—as happiest in these less verbal endeavors: "As you drew / I felt released, calm" ("Drawing"); "Whenever you worked at your carpet I felt happy" ("The Rag Rug"). But while Hughes is reading Conrad's novels aloud to Plath as she works—"cradling your freed mind in my voice"—Plath's mind is busy at quite another task, unearthing something deeper: "A knowledge like the halves of a broken magnet." The "broken magnet" may be their marriage, as Hughes discovers years later when he reads his dead wife's journal and realizes that, even in such seemingly intimate moments, her thoughts were nowhere near his, nowhere near what he fondly imagined:

> Your diary confided . . .
> What furies you bled into that rug.
> As if you had dragged it, like your own
> entrails,
> Out through your navel.

The effect is of a double palimpsest, as Hughes recollects such small, domestic incidents and then refers to Plath's own journal accounts of these same events—journal entries he reads in the narrative "now" of the poems. In "Visit," he notes that

> Ten years after your death
> I meet on a page of your journal,
> as never before,
> The shock of your joy . . .
> Then, under the panic, the nightmare
> That came rolling to crush you:
> Old despair and the new agony
> Melting into one familiar hell.

Throughout these poems, Hughes the young husband expresses bafflement at his wife's rages, her battle with inner demons, and her ever-present fascination—under her vivacity and love of life—with "the death who had already donned your features, / The mask of his disguise" ("Remission"). He is also puzzled that such furious but unfocused energy does not find its way into the tightly controlled "New Critical" poems Plath is still writing in the early days of their marriage. With his own affinities for Jungian analysis, the occult, and the often-violent forces of nature, Hughes encourages her to draw poetry out of her inmost psychic depths. In "Minotaur," he recalls

> The high stool you swung that day
> Demented by my being
> Twenty minutes late for baby-minding.
>
> 'Marvelous!' I shouted, 'Go on,
> Smash it into kindling.
> That's the stuff you're keeping out of
> your poems!'

In heeding her husband's encouragement, Plath does indeed find the key that unlocks her creative authority and starts the final glorious spate of "Ariel" poems that would make her name; but it is the same key that opens up memories of Otto Plath, the father who died when she was eight, and whom she hardly knew. In "The Table," Hughes recounts another example of a good intention gone terribly awry—his attempt to fashion for her "a solid writing table / That would last a lifetime." With horror, he watches her sit at her new table, using her newly focused creative energies to call up her "Daddy resurrected": the man-ghoul who comes between the couple, "impersonating your whole memory," and effectively supplanting her husband until "turning to touch me / You recognized him."

Birthday Letters reactivates the question of whether Plath was doomed from the outset. We find ourselves wondering, along with Hughes, whether the manic-depressive fluctuations in Plath's moods, her sudden fits of rage, her episodes of terrorized insomnia, and her increasingly morbid but poetically inspiring obsession with her long-dead father were all accelerating toward an inevitable tragic conclusion. We also wonder, with Hughes, what part he himself played in the complex of factors that led to her death—or whether, in fact, he was the bulwark that held her fragile psyche steady longer than if she had been on her own or with some other man. In the end, would Plath have lived if Hughes had stayed with her? Such a question

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implies a superhuman degree of responsibility, calling up, in its enormity, depths of guilt that no one could adequately confront and that these poems can only tangentially address.

Perhaps Plath simply demanded too much of everyone—even her husband, who had early on accepted the role of "your nurse and your protector" that seemed to be required in the dynamic of their marriage. He was undoubtedly wrenched by Plath's volatility: cheery, affectionate euphoria one minute, destructive "dybbuk fury" the next. At one point, she apparently ripped up her husband's journals and drafts of his poems. Many a lesser man would have fled, with no condemnation from anyone regarding his self-protective behavior.

Plath committed suicide (or was it a cry for help gone fatally awry, another death-and-resurrection ritual enactment from which she expected to be rescued?) when she and Hughes were separated and he was seeing another woman. Alone, Plath found herself more vulnerable, more shaky, more susceptible to impulsive actions than either she or her husband might have foreseen she would be without his stabilizing presence. How much blame can be assigned to either of them? And thirty-five years later, why should any of us take sides or judge? Can we not reminisce and sorrow with Hughes, while at the same time we respect and admire Plath—recognizing that both poets were flawed human beings, and both made choices that ultimately led to fatal consequences? In these poems, Hughes seems to seek no less than reconciliation with Plath and with his younger self, across the boundary of life and death. He writes in "The Prism":

> It goes with me, your seer's vision-stone
> Like a lucky stone, my unlucky stone . . .
> I turn it, a prism, this way and that.
> That way I see the filmy surf-wind flicker
> Of your ecstasies, your visions in the crystal.
> This way the irreparably-crushed lamp
> In my crypt of dreams, totally dark,
> Under your gravestone.

"What happens in the heart simply happens." This insight comes to Hughes near the end of a poem called "Child's Park." Bleak and serene at once, it seems the essence of the mature poet's enduring love, tragic acceptance, and regret.

The Honor of Germany

LETTERS OF HEINRICH AND THOMAS MANN, 1900–1949
Edited by Hans Wysling. Translated by Don Reneau. University of California Press. $50.

Reviewed by JEFFREY MEYERS

Heinrich and Thomas Mann were—with William and Henry James, Aldous and Julian Huxley—the most distinguished literary brothers of the twentieth century. The Manns had lived together in Rome and Palestrina in the late 1890s. Heinrich, four years older, published the first of his many commercial novels in 1900, which was immediately surpassed by Thomas's *Buddenbrooks* the following year. Annoyed by Heinrich's torrential output of inferior works ("Good God, you've finished something else already—and I'm not even finished with your last one"), Thomas fired off a sharp but salutary salvo on "these strained jokes, these vulgar, shrill, hectic, unnatural calumnies of the truth and humanity, these disgraceful grimaces and somersaults, the desperate attacks on the reader's interest! . . . It is, in my view, a greediness for effect that's corrupting you."

But Thomas—himself overwhelmed by "the constant threat of exhaustion, exaggerated scruples, fatigue, doubt, a lingering pain and weakness"—counted on his brother's sympathy and trust. When struggling with the concluding line of "Blood of the Walsungs," a mild satire on his wife's Jewish family, Thomas asked Heinrich if he should delete the Yiddish word, and rather crude ending, in the serial version: "we've *beganeft* [cheated] him—the *goy*." Heinrich helped him find the more subtle and effective "his existence will be a little less trivial, from now on."

The Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann, based on the German edition of 1968, contains 272 letters, about two-thirds of which are by Thomas. In style and content, the letters of

Jeffrey Meyers has recently published biographies of Edmund Wilson, Robert Frost, Humphrey Bogart, and Gary Cooper.

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both brothers are formal, reserved, and dignified—more like Conrad than like Keats or Lawrence. But startling self-revelations erupt in moments of passion, anger, illness, and grief. In 1901, during his homoerotic infatuation with Paul Ehrenberg, Thomas confessed: "What is involved is not a love affair . . . but a friendship . . . which (I candidly admit) at certain times, especially in hours of depression and loneliness, takes on a character of somewhat excessive suffering." When his first child, Erika, was born, he admitted that he had wanted a son but then added, rather surprisingly: "Perhaps the daughter will offer me a closer relationship to the 'other' sex, of which I still, though now a husband, actually know nothing."

Thomas's conflict between life and art and his attraction to death were personal as well as literary motifs. A Christmas celebration, when "the house was filled to overflowing and life was amusing and boisterous," was inevitably followed by "the usual stomach complaints, with depressed nerves and low blood pressure." Expressing the theme of *The Magic Mountain* as early as 1913, he wrote that his "growing sympathy with death is deeply inborn: my entire interest has always been captured by decay."

World War I drove the brothers apart (only three letters exist between 1915 and 1921), just as the threat of World War II made them allies. Heinrich, who had been influenced more by French than by German and Russian literature, espoused internationalism and opposed the First World War; Thomas identified with the German cause. Heinrich used his 1915 essay on Zola to attack his brother's views; Thomas spent the next three years trying to justify his position in *Reflections of a Non-Political Man.* Meanwhile, in response to Heinrich's attempt at reconciliation, he condemned "the truly French spitefulness, slanders and slurs of this brilliant piece of hackwork. . . . Every line of your letter was dictated by moral smugness and self-righteousness." They did not come together again until 1922, when Heinrich seemed to be dying of peritonitis.

After their reunion, as Heinrich said in 1927, German literature was "ruled absolutely by the Mann family." After Hitler took power in 1933, and they were both living in exile, Heinrich urged Thomas to continue to publish

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in Germany. In 1939, shortly before the war broke out, Thomas, whistling in the dark, declared: "We know that the Germans basically hate their regime and that the only thing they fear more than Hitler is war." But by 1941, when they had both emigrated to America, Thomas wrote that "most profoundly foreign to us today is Germany, that savage, reckless and disintegrated country of our heritage and language, and, compared to its fatal foreignness, every foreign place seems familiar." His final pronouncement was the exalted yet truthful statement "Where I am, there is German culture." As François Mauriac wrote of Thomas: *"Il a préservé l'honneur de l'Allemagne."*

The younger brother thrived in America. He had the luxury of choosing between a position at Princeton, "with its European familiarity, or the land of the future, cheap and climactically magnificent, California." His name sounded English. He knew the language; had won the Nobel Prize; was married to a handsome and intelligent wife; had talented children with literary reputations of their own; was a friend of President Roosevelt; and had a best seller when *Joseph the Provider* was selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club. Heinrich, by contrast, did not know English, was less adaptable, had no literary reputation in America, and was married to an embarrassing second wife, an alcoholic barmaid who committed suicide in 1944. Thomas arranged Heinrich's American visa and supported him until his death in 1950. Heinrich was given a year's sinecure at Warner Bros., where, he explained, "people vacillate between veneration or indulgence and the need to put me properly to work." As Thomas noted in his fraternal obituary, "He lived here quite unrecognized, quite isolated." Ironically, Heinrich is mainly remembered today for the Marlene Dietrich film *The Blue Angel*, based on his early novel *Professor Unrat.*

Although this English edition of the Mann letters is needed and welcome, Anthony Heilbut's foreword is misleading. He overemphasizes Thomas Mann's homoeroticism; claims that Heinrich's condemnation of his brother's marriage "may have expressed a residual anti-Semitism," though Heinrich himself married a Jewish actress in 1914; unaccountably selects *The Beloved Returns* as Thomas's best novel; and maintains that "both brothers lived to see their reputations plummet." But Thomas published his masterpiece, *Doctor Faustus,* at the end of his life. The three major biographies of Thomas Mann by Ronald Hayman, Donald A. Prater, and Anthony Heilbut, published in the last few years, and his *Six Early Stories,* which appeared in 1997, testify to his enduring reputation.

Hans Wysling's long introduction, intended for a German audience, is solid but terribly dull. His elaborate notes, which occupy a quarter of the book, are repetitious and confusing. For example, the first time Riva is mentioned in the notes, readers are simply directed to a subsequent citation; it's not until some pages later that Riva is finally identified as a town on Lake Garda. Many notes are not up-to-date. There are no death dates, for instance, for Michael Mann (d. 1977), Elisabeth Bergner (d. 1986), Hans (known in America as James) Meisel (d. 1991), and Gottfried Bermann Fischer (d. 1995). Don Reneau's translation makes Thomas and Heinrich's letters sound similar rather than distinct. Some passages are unclear: "The collar pouch is from us"; "But what all is unknown." Other passages seem stilted and awkward: "I heard in Basel that you had agreed with a student group there to deliver an address." A forty-page section of articles and speeches by the brothers includes many pompous addresses, but omits, for instance, Heinrich's crucial essay on Zola. The bibliography lists no biographical or critical works in English.

Despite these flaws, *The Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann* adds to our intimate knowledge of both the lesser-known and—more crucially—the better-known brother. Thomas Mann's intellectually rich and demanding fiction, full of symbols and allusions, raises many provocative questions: What makes an artist? Why must he oppose conventional society? How does he create? How does "dangerous" music inspire him? Why must he suffer? How is disease related to art? Despite occasional longueurs, his letters, like his novels, have a powerful cumulative effect. They reveal a man of magnanimity and intelligence, whose mind, harnessing the threatening demons, remained creative and alert until the final hour.

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THE READER REPLIES

THE NEW ISSUE AND THE NEW EDITOR

I am usually not a letter writer, certainly not to editors of prestigious publications. Like most of us, I mourned the loss of Joseph Epstein and his delightful essays. What makes me take pen in hand is the spring issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, it being the first issue to reflect the influence of our new editor, Philonoë. There has been a sea change; a cool and refreshing breeze can be felt. The writing sparkles. The contributors are eclectic but considered for their literary skills and message. I laud this change of direction, and although I continue to mourn the loss of Aristides and his essays, I celebrate this editorial shift.

RICHARD S. WEISS, M.D., F.A.C.G.
White Plains, New York

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, eschewing everything but quality, was unique and I adored it. I don't think that the new AMERICAN SCHOLAR is for me. Please cancel my subscription.

BREWSTER P. CAMPBELL, JR.
Bethesda, Maryland

Please enter my subscription so that I can continue to read Anne Fadiman. When she wrote for *Civilization*, every time an issue arrived, I stopped everything to read her column. Couldn't live without it. So here's hoping for the best for her new venture.

DONNA BRINKMAN
Dayton, Ohio

We *Civilization* readers will miss Anne Fadiman enormously—but we AMERICAN SCHOLAR readers can't wait till she adds her wonderful mind to its mix. I hope she'll still write about what we spend our lives doing—reading!

ANNIE DILLARD
Middletown, Connecticut

The names of those individuals at Phi Beta Kappa who chose to fire Joseph Epstein are unknown and deservedly so. I have nothing but contempt for those aging 60s radicals with their degrees in sociology. The sooner all of them retire, the sooner their shallow legacy will disappear. To those who actively sought to fire Mr. Epstein, and to those who cravenly went along with the decision, I wish them the most appropriate thing I can imagine. I hope they will have nothing to read but the future issues of the SCHOLAR without him. As for me, I have purchased and read my last issue.

DAMIAN VIRANT
Westlake Village, California

With all my high personal regard for David Godine and his fine publishing, I still deplore his calling, in your letters section, the seemingly requested resignation of Joseph Epstein "shameful" and the consequence of "petty and small-minded feuds." It does not take away the honor due Mr. Epstein for his years of stellar editing of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR to accept that there can be honest differences of editorial approaches and that the SCHOLAR is not a one-man journal. The first issue under the new editor gives promise of a fresh outlook that properly respects the tradition Joseph Epstein did so much to help establish.

THEODORE WILENTZ
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Your new format surprised me with its elegance (but then I thought the old one was

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elegant, too). Simple, with a dash of color, and handsome printing. So far, so good. My best wishes for a successful venture into the twenty-first century go out to the new editor.

Like many others, I feel as if I've lost a personal friend with Aristides' farewell. Although there will be other talented columnists for your readers to enjoy, none will ever seem quite the same.

BARBARA C. COCHRAN
Aztec, New Mexico

I would like to add my name to the many readers who have written in order to say "so long" to Joseph Epstein. I will miss his marvelous essays.

My sincere compliments to the SCHOLAR on the excellent issue in front of me. The cover design is superb, and all of the contents were a delight to read.

HANS WYNBERG
Groningen, The Netherlands

A great challenge of new editors is to resist change for the sake of change. This is only Anne Fadiman's first issue, but if it is a portent of things to come, I pray she will mend her ways before it is too late.

BAHRAM NOWZAD
Bethesda, Maryland

I look forward to seeing Anne Fadiman's ideas take shape in your journal, and I want you to know that I have taken a subscription that is based largely on her selection as editor. I am confident she will do a terrific job.

GREGORY L. WATERS
Interim President, Montclair State University
Upper Montclair, New Jersey

I shall miss the essays about lyricists and Dead Sea Scrolls, about lobotomies and Defining Deviancy Down, but those essays were in the old AMERICAN SCHOLAR. I bought the old AMERICAN SCHOLAR because I enjoyed reading it. If you won't print it, there is no reason to subscribe. You will pray to the idols of multiculturalism. I will read my John Buchan.

ARTHUR F. FERGENSON
Baltimore, Maryland

A new subscription in recognition of your new editor. If she can take a chance, so can I.

DARAL G. CONKLIN
Kailua, Hawaii

AT LARGE AND AT SMALL

When my wife, Laura, and I read that the helm of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR was changing hands, our first thought was that we would miss Aristides. We have kept up our subscription in large part due to our love of Mr. Epstein's essays. So when the new SCHOLAR arrived, I read the first essay with an open mind, but with my heart in my mouth. After the first two paragraphs I had to find out what Philonoë meant—had to piece it together with "noetic" ("philo" is easy). After the first two pages I grinned at Laura and said, "This is going to be fine." Many thanks to Philonoë for her first essay. Aristides is a hard act to follow, but "At Large and At Small" does it neatly.

STEVE EMERY
Hillsborough, North Carolina

There is little of the "Nihil humani alieni mihi puto" in Philonoë (ugh—who thought of using that obscure name?). As it is, I can't help myself from imagining scantily clad Philonoë and Isadora Duncan vaulting barefoot through the forest green adoring butterflies and singing songs of the Auvergne to children who clap and laugh around a banyan tree.

THEODOR SITEA
Glendale, Arizona

Philonoë's essay, "Collecting Nature," brought to mind an experience based on my own intraspecies tolerances. I do swat mosquitoes, but I will often defer my immediate plans to aid an insect or spider through its copings with our civilization. Some time ago I discovered a chrysalis of unknown origin in my car. I carefully transferred it to a safe container and stored it until a speckle-winged creature emerged. With some emotion, I ushered it into the wild. Some weeks later, while reading an illustrated article on local deforestation, I realized that I had joyfully released a gypsy moth. The divine response to my benevolence was

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truly astounding. Our gypsy moth infestation promptly disappeared!

BOB WEDEEN
Coatesville, Pennsylvania

I was curious about the meaning of Philonoë's classical pseudonym. Does she want her readers to think of her as a lover of things of the mind, which might be taken as a translation of this word? Indeed, the first essay by Philonoë displays that quality in the elegant and charming tradition set by Aristides. But the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* tells that there were *two* mythological personages with this name, one a daughter of Tyndareus, and one a daughter of Iobates.

DAVID ISAACSON
Kalamazoo, Michigan

The editors reply: Your translation is a good one. Philonoë was chosen for the meaning of her name—an apt job description for an essayist, we thought—not for her place in mythology, which is modest. However, the Philonoë we had in mind is the one who was the daughter of Tyndareus, the king of Sparta, and his wife, Leda (when the latter was not fooling around with swans).

THE LEGACY OF A LYNCHING

Robert F. Worth's essay should be required reading for juniors and seniors in high school, and for college students. They need to know. Are we responsible for the misdeeds of our ancestors? No. The statute of limitations does not apply. Nor are those who inherited from them *more* responsible. But what we are responsible for is learning from what happened before, and then not repeating the horrendous things. Somehow we must make all sides aware of that responsibility.

SALLY ANN HELF
Dalzell, South Carolina

While I admired much about Robert F. Worth's essay on the Coatesville lynching, something seemed left out, as though his reasoning had a moral blind spot. The essay felt, in the last analysis, self-protective. It could be that I missed the whole of Mr. Worth's point, wrapped as it was in his fine prose, or it could be that he was manipulating chunks of prose to leave omitted—safely omitted—a bigger point than any of the points he addressed.

I was bothered by how little space he devoted to the supremacist psychology behind the reactions of his family members to the idea of a public atonement for a lynching that took place eighty-five years ago—their hemming and hawing, their self-serving denials. I cannot help feeling that Mr. Worth should have construed more from their hysterical reactions than he did. Here, as elsewhere in the essay, I was bothered by his tone of moral ambivalence, characterized by such phrases as "Whether one accepts this viewpoint or not." Mr. Worth quoted the opinion of rap artist Wise Intelligent ("They're cutting minority-based scholarships, they're cutting affirmative action, the inner cities are given the poorest educational systems in the country")—but then just moved on in a brisk way and offered no responding opinion, no yea or nay. The next sentence made mention of the "anger" driving Wise Intelligent's words, but offered nothing of the author's opinion on the truth or falsity of those words. I finished the essay with a lingering suspicion that maybe Mr. Worth's own emotions were closer to those of his hysterical relatives than he would care to think; or maybe the difference was just that, whereas their justifications were less articulate and hence racist, his justifications were cadenced and writerly and hence urbane.

I do not want to come down too harshly on anyone who is trying to wade through the quagmire of race in America, but an appreciable degree of depth (even wisdom) would have been added, and the essay would have been more morally convincing, if the author had had the nerve to extrapolate beyond just that one terrible incident in Coatesville and the issue of his family's involvement in it, and concluded his essay with a broader, less personalized overview of race, racial legacies, and contemporary politics.

In the big picture, Coatesville, and the lynching that happened there, isn't the point. The point is the legacy of racism in America that

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the country has never owned up to conscientiously enough to devote the patience, money, or effort to doing its utmost about. True, as we look at America today, we can see that, at least from the middle class on up, we have made great strides toward creating a pluralistic society—but only from the middle class on up. The downside is that the underclass is as angry, racist, and disenfranchised as it can be, and who belongs there (well, no one belongs there, but who *is* there) has a great deal to do with inherited psychological mechanisms and inherited privileges. Considering the specifics of the scenario Mr. Worth describes, I am not even saying he and his family were wrong to conclude that a public apology for a decades-old lynching would be an outdated, ineffectual gesture. But whether or not his family still is or ever was responsible for the incident at Coatesville, we are *all* responsible as Americans for the conditions of the poor; and it is a responsibility more of us should embrace, regardless of our family histories. For a while, Mr. Worth seemed, in his essay, on the way toward encompassing that broader perspective, cutting across lines of white guilt and white/black responsibility, and summarizing a viewpoint that could shake readers out of post-Reagan, end-of-the-century complacency. But his pen flinched, and his eyes blinked.

DARRYL LORENZO WELLINGTON
Savannah, Georgia

LIGHTNING AND THE LIGHTNING BUG

As I read Ved Mehta's essay, I was pleased to see his principles of good writing as absorbed from William Shawn: "clarity, harmony, truth. . . ." The words evoked a memory of reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* fifty years ago. In conversation with Lynch, Stephen presents the following thoughts on beauty:

> Aquinas says: *Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur integritas, consonantia, claritas.* I translate it so: *Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance.*

From Aquinas, to Joyce, to Mehta, if this reader's apprenticeship continues to pursue the writer's apprenticeship, we may indeed rise together by the height of Montaigne's "one inch" from time to time. May Ved Mehta continue his apprenticeship for many more inches to come.

THOMAS LOCKWOOD
Albuquerque, New Mexico

MATHEMATICS FORTY YEARS AFTER SPUTNIK

I was delighted to see Solomon Golomb's fine article in your spring issue. It's always nice to find articles about mathematics that are good not only for the general public but also for those who are working in mathematics every day. I am recommending it to friends. In general, the issue contains quite splendid things. I predict a great revival of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

G. L. ALEXANDERSON
President, The Mathematical Association of America
Santa Clara, California

COMPRESSION WOOD

Very few writers have gotten to me, mostly poets and essayists. Franklin Burroughs got to me. I've read his essay twice, and while some of the magic that was there on first reading slipped away on the second, I still felt its beauty. As so often happens with things that are beautiful, close inspection sometimes reveals what makes it beautiful, and the beauty dissipates a little. But that's good. It's human. Perhaps that's why I find his essay so moving: besides being wonderfully crafted, it is heartfelt.

LEONARD NATINSKY
West Bloomfield, Michigan

THE UNCERTAIN ART

Congratulations to Sherwin B. Nuland, M.D., for initiating most appropriately his timely column in the SCHOLAR with a truly wise focus on the Hippocratic property of

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"uncertainty" in the age-old art of medicine!

To strengthen Dr. Nuland's unflattering but well-founded position on the methodology and logic of medicine, it should be pointed out that, prior to John Keats, the English medical-student-turned-poet, and William Osler, the outstanding Canadian physician, specifically cited in the inaugural column as members of the medical profession endowed with a keen sense of medicine's inexact nature as a professional field, there was the celebrated John Locke, the English physician-philosopher whose whole historically influential accent on human fallibility and unavoidable probability with respect to all empirical matters of opinion or judgment, including any general conclusions arrived at by induction from medical observations, was closely related to his own medical background and personal friendship with Thomas Sydenham, "the English Hippocrates."

PATRICK ROMANELL
author, John Locke and Medicine
Tucson, Arizona

JOURNAL

William Ian Miller's imagined majors in Knave Studies and Fool Studies would surely make for a better undergraduate curriculum than many of the trivial and trendy majors now offered. Mr. Miller's suggestion is a timely reminder of Edward Gibbon's observation in chapter 3 of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: "The reign of Antonius is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing few materials for history, which is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind."

For his moving account of a January 1997 epiphany at Green Bay's Lambeau Field, I nominate William Ian Miller to be sports editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

ROBERT FAIRCHILD
Hampton, Virginia

PARADELLES

I would like to respond to the reply by Billy Collins to Roger Ide's critique of his poem, "Paradelle for Susan," in the Spring 1998 "Reader Replies." The observation by Mr. Collins that Mr. Ide seems "to have available the kind of spare time the form requires" and his challenge to Mr. Ide to write his own paradelle seem to imply that no one could do any better or have an easier time doing so.

One morning, my mother pointed out Billy Collins's paradelle to me. I saw it as a poor example of the paradelle form, and decided to try to compose one of my own, but I did it in less than forty-five minutes, before eating breakfast. I should note that I am only fifteen years old, and I wrote this paradelle when I was fourteen years of age.

Dragonfly Paradelle

Miniature dragons, explosive in color
Miniature dragons, explosive in color
Pose silent, on grass in camouflage.
Pose silent, on grass in camouflage.
Miniature in camouflage on pose.
Dragon's explosive color, silent in grass.

Movement captures their eyes.
Movement captures their eyes.
Small prey circling above.
Small prey circling above.
Their small movement captures
Circling eyes: Prey above.

Swift talons shoot skyward.
Swift talons shoot skyward.
Dragon fire surrounds small victims.
Dragon fire surrounds small victims.
Skyward, small fire talons shoot
Swift victims. Dragon surrounds.

Their swift fire eyes pose in camouflage;
Small talons shot skyward on.
Explosive movement captures color.
Miniature dragon prey surrounds
Small silent victims in grass:
Dragons circling above.

CARRIE L. COUNTRYMAN
Brush Prairie, Washington

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ALFRED KAZIN

1915–1998

Alfred Kazin died on June 5, the morning of his eighty-third birthday. Kazin was a great supporter of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *on whose editorial board he served from 1959 to 1969. His final contribution was "The Art City Our Fathers Built," the lead essay in our spring issue. This is not the last you will hear of him in these pages, but for the moment, let us remember Kazin not as a critic or a professor or a public intellectual, but as a reader, someone to whom books were everything. The following passages about reading are taken from letters he wrote to Anne Fadiman during his last year.*

At sixteen, I earned $5 a week delivering urine samples left at neighborhood drug stores to the lab that employed me. "Doc" behind the counter was always ready to take out of your eye a bit of the coal routinely flying in the air. If he was an immigrant Jew who still read hungrily, he would also tell me that the translation of *Crime and Punishment* I carried on my route was not as correct as the one *he* could recommend. O those ancient Jewish immigrant savants! How I wanted one to be *my* father, whose reading was limited to the *World*, the *Jewish Daily Forward*, and communications from the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators that opened with the words "Dear Sir and Brother."

As I discovered from teaching some very smart students at Brown, Cornell, etc., these last few years of my "retirement," the obsessive reading that you and I know better than our faces in the mirror just don't mean nothing these days. In my course some years ago at Brown on God and the American Writer, I detoured lovingly on the great scene in *The Bros Karamazov* when Jesus comes to earth when the Grand Inquisitor is burning heretics. After class a student told me she had taken the book out of the library and wanted to know where she could find the scene. "Read the book and you'll come to it." A long wail. "You mean *you want me to read the whole book*??!!!"

I am miserable over the sexual propaganda and vague pseudo-leftism that now dominate literature departments in so many universities. No interest in or hope for literature there. But the Right (often enough the ex-Left) is also just as removed from any real concern with literature. How sad that so many ideologists and party-liners find no consolation, spiritual recovery or sheer pleasure in literature. Yesterday, sick at heart at the struggle with my 82-year-old body as I fought a violent cold rainstorm, I finally got home, picked up Hardy's poems and read myself back to life, as it were, thanks to his gift for putting one back into the whole design of life and death. No false optimism there, but what bracing truth in the very lilt of the words.

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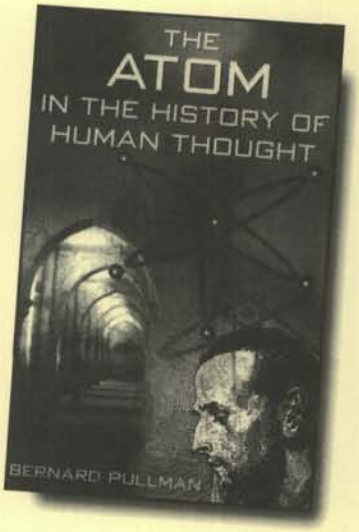

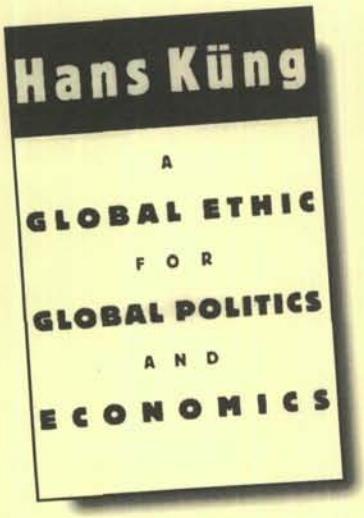

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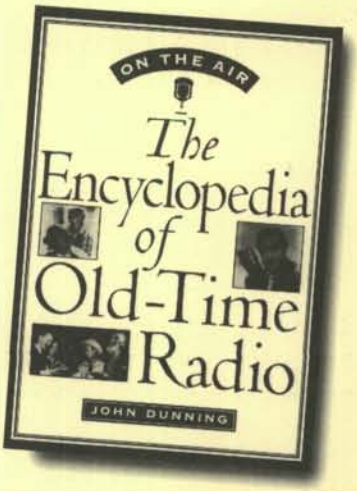

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TRANSLATED BY EWALD OSERS

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